

ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTER AMY DORRIT IN THE FILM "LITTLE DORRIT" BY CHARLES DICKENS

Agung Prasetyo^{1*}, Wildah Saputri²

Universitas Indraprasta PGRI¹, Universitas Indraprasta PGRI²

Aprasetyo20@gmail.com^{1*}, wisari90@gmail.com²

Keywords: Main Character; Amy Dorrit; Little Dorrit Film; Character Analysis; Film;	Abstract: Purpose This study the author wants to analyze the main character Amy Dorrit in the film Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens (1812-1870). The author hopes that students of Indraprasta PGRI University and other readers will know more about Dickens' work and ideas. The research used descriptive qualitative method. The research was conducted in two ways; the first source of data, the author used Little Dorrit. The second source of data the author uses opinions and criticisms about the film Little Dorrit, information about the character of the girl in the Victorian era and the biography of Charles Dickens, in addition to that the author also uses a literary approach to analyze the film. The main character in the film Little Dorrit is Amy Dorrit. Amy, otherwise known as Little Dorrit, lives in the Marshalsea Prison with her father, William, who is the prison's longest serving inmate. Although born and bred in the prison, Amy is far from being downtrodden and has grown up to be a gentle and kind-hearted yet enterprising and spirited young woman. Amy became a major figure in this story because of the intensity of his presence from the beginning to the end of the story and has a relationship with each character in the story. Character that is in the main character is kind, merciful, modest, and polite. The writer analyses the subordinate leaders such as attitudes, and actions to clarify the nature and affect the main character.
Submitted:	Revised: Accepted:

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the mirror of human life that portrays the human feelings, thoughts, imaginations, and perceptions can be viewed based on personal judgment. Taylor's (1997: 15) says that "literature, like other arts, is essentially an imaginative act of the writer's imagination in selecting, ordering, and interpreting life-experiences".

Basically, the kinds of literature are only prose fiction, poetry, and novel but recently in the 21st century the film is accepted as one of literary works. Film is a story which made by some elements and techniques and shown on the television or theatre. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "film is a series of moving pictures recorded with sound that tells a story, shown on television or at the cinema". Bruce Springsteen state that "I think that is what film and art and music do; they can work as a map of sorts for your feelings." It means that a film also portrays the human life like another literature. According to David Bordwell and Kristin



Thompson in their book *Film Art: An Introduction* (2003), One popular way of grouping fiction films is by genre, such as Western, musicals, war films, science fiction, and so on. But there are three widely recognized genres: the Western, the horror film, and the musical. Another way we group films based on the ideas of how they were made and what effects they attempt to achieve. They are documentary, experimental, and animation film.

The film the writer chooses to discuss in this thesis belongs to the Victorian Era. The Victorian Age is a great age of novels due to its great leisure time, wider education, and the absence of other forms of entertainment (Unstead, 1994: A2). There are many great novelists from that era whose popularity last up to the present, such as George Elliot, William Makepeace Thackeray, the Bronte sisters, and Charles Dickens. The Victorian Era in England (1830-1901) was believed to be the golden age of the British Empire. England developed rapidly in economy and industry under the reign of Queen Victoria.

Among the Victorian great novelists and their works, the writer chooses to analyse a film by Charles Dickens. The first reason why the writer chooses Charles Dickens is because Dickens has a never-ending popularity; his works are still widely read as they were first published Schwarzbach (2002). He was the most acceptable to readers of all ages and the subjects of his books more than any other novelists (Obermier, 1990: IV). The second reason why the writer chooses Dickens is because Dickens' films are rich in their social contents. His films can broaden up the watchers' understanding and knowledge of England in the Nineteenth Century, especially about the social live and problems of the people living in that era.

Little Dorrit has the distinction of occupying a special place in the oeuvre of Dickens (Wain, 1992:175). All the details of the Marshalsea prison, which are described in a marvelous way in the film, are taken from the memories when Dickens' father was imprisoned there Scribner (1980). The reason what the writer chooses the film Little Dorrit it because it shows the setting human society that includes nearly everything of importance, lovingly shaped, and also Dickens' greatest efforts in solving the specific problems of a long fictional story. Dickens is great in describing and giving solution to social problems; he is great social novelist (Collins, 2016). Little Dorrit is one of Dickens' most profound films and also one of the most significant works of the Nineteenth Century. It will not fail to be thought of, as speaking with a peculiarity and interest to our own time (Wall, 1990:34)

Although one of Dickens' characteristic is to put boys or men as his protagonists, somehow his novels seem to have a certain belief about the Victorian women: what her limitations should be, how she should fulfil her domestic role and moral attitudes, and what part she should play in the society. The ideal Victorian feminine figure is to be the "angel of the house" (Coventry Patmore, 1823-1896, taken from www.sprog.auc.dk). The "angel of the house" is what a Victorian woman should be, and it is reflected in the lives of Victorian women, and it is also surely connected that the husbands have to be the master (Smith-Rosenberg, 1986). The female figures in Charles Dickens' film mostly seem to represent his ideology of womanhood. Dickens divides the ideology of womanhood into two types: he first is the angelic female figures that are associated with selfless devotion and maternal duties, while the second is dangerous female figures who are associated with sexuality or passion (Slifsgaard, www.sprog.auc.dk). In Dickens' Little Dorrit, the writer does not find the representation of the second ideology of



womanhood in the figure of the main female character. Instead, Dickens appears to show the ideology of an "angel of the house" in the figure of the childlike Amy Dorrit (or Little Dorrit). Therefore, the writer is interested in analysing Amy Dorrit's character traits to prove that can be interpreted as the representation of an "angel of the house."

METHOD

Several scientific writing should have a certain kind of method to analyze the problem that is taken, so does this thesis. It uses an approach to discover accurate information about Amy Dorrit character film entitled "Little Dorrit". Data collected can be analyzed using statistical technique and would also be considered qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive research involves describing and interpreting events, conditions or situations of the present. Generally, findings and conclusions only apply to the sample studied. Descriptive research can use qualitative or quantitative methods to describe or interpret a current event, condition and situation. The research was conducted by two ways; the first data source that the writer uses in this thesis is Charles Dickens' film, Little Dorrit. The second data source that the writer uses is the criticisms about Little Dorrit, the information concerning of the Amy Dorrit and the biography of Charles Dickens, the writer uses literary approach to analyze the film.

The data and supporting information are collected by reading all references. Of course, the first step is to watch the film, Little Dorrit, as the main source. The writer watches the film for several times to understand the film clearly. The second step is finding the criticisms about Little Dorrit, the information concerning of the "angel of the house," and the biography of Charles Dickens, the writer uses literary approach to analyse the film.

The steps in film Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens conducted the writer as follows:

1. Watch the film Little Dorrit to appreciate and understand the form of stories that exist in the film.
2. Noted several problems that arise in the film Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens.
3. The collection of data related to research and related aspects, then the data corresponding to clarify the issues to be discussed.
4. Analyze data to realize the problems that have been formulated based on the analysis of character.

Research conducted by the writer using several techniques as follows:

- a. The Technique of Literature
The thesis writer tried to find the data needed to read as many books related to research.
- b. The Technique of Descriptive
The thesis writer tried to describe in detail the things that will be analyzed. In this case the main character in the film Little Dorrit was analyzed and then linked to a personal opinion or the facts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This data is taken from the movie Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens, the most popular storyteller of his time, a zealous social reformer, the esteemed leader of the English literary scene and a wholehearted friend to the poor, Charles Dickens was an unrestrained satirist who spared no one. His writings defined the complications, ironies, diversions and cruelties of the new urban life brought by the industrial revolution. The film consists of two discs are divided into 8 episodes with a black cover and there are three figures on the cover and title text is white. Version of the film being analysed is the production in 2010 by Andrew Davies.



The presentation of the character (disposition) in the film is done by the author either by analytic methods or dramatic methods. In general, the figures involved in the story is a round figure, because they have a variety of character. However, although in general they do not change/development of characters in the story.

a. Amy Dorrit

The youngest member of the Dorrit family, Amy is a 20-something woman who looks like an adolescent. She lives her life in totally unacknowledged service to her deluded and hapless family. Her main personality trait is utter selflessness.

A Thin Line Between Selflessness and Masochism

Young women in the 19th century were supposed to be totally devoted to others - to kind of a crazy degree. Seriously. Check out this nice little passage from a conduct book by Sarah Stickney Ellis, who wrote that ladies are "most valued, admired and loved" for being totally self-sacrificing, and that if women want to go for broke getting something done, it's only proper for them to go all out if the goal is "wholly unconnected with their own personal exaltation or enjoyment, and related only to some beloved" (*The Women of England, Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits*). And you know who really takes this kind of thing to heart? Oh, yeah, our good friend Amy Dorrit. She is one totally devoted daughter and sister. All day, every day she slaves to take care of her family, to the point of actually not eating in order to feed her dad. All her hard work is taken completely for granted, but does she get upset? No. She just smiles sweetly and keeps on plugging away. Dickens was really into this kind of female character - the unassuming, super-nice young woman who lives only to help others. (Check out Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times* or Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*, for example.) But something tells us that Amy might be taking the whole thing just a little bit too far, even in Dickens's mind. Sure, it's nice to try to cater to your half-crazy dear old dad's whims - but is it really part of the "devoted daughter" shtick to let him try to pimp you out to the jailer's son without ever calling him on it? (Check out Book 1, Chapter 19 for the whole horror show.) That's some going-above-and-beyond stuff right there, especially given how much anxiety the Victorians had about sexual purity.

So, what, exactly, is the deal with Amy's values? Are girl readers supposed to find her admirable and want to be just like her? Are boys supposed to want to marry her? Or is she an example of the Victorian ideal of womanhood taken to a monstrous extreme, so we're supposed to take her as a warning? To put it another way, is the fact that she holds onto her raggedy prison dress, even after the family becomes rich, somehow cute and nostalgic? Or is it passive-aggressive and pathological? Or, to put it yet a third way, what's the difference between the horrible Mrs. General, whose life's purpose is to avoid anything unpleasant and "to cram all articles of difficulty into cupboards, lock them up, and say they had no existence" (2.2.24) and Amy Dorrit, who at every insult "drove the thought away; and entertained no harder reflection" (2.15.110)? (Hey, while we're thinking about it, you know who else is really good at this kind of denial? Pet Gowan, who will "love [Henry Gowan], admire him, praise him, and conceal all his faults, until she dies" (2.11.13). And we know what a winner Gowan is.)



b. Arthur Clennam

The 40-year-old son of a cold, harsh woman and a weak man, Arthur struggles to find a place for himself at a seemingly too-late time of life. After learning a few harsh lessons about love and finance, he gets a happy ending.

To Be or Not To Be: That Is Arthur

Remember our old friend Hamlet and his endless going back and forth about what to do, if anything? To be (i.e., to kill the king, or take some kind of action) or not to be (to just kill himself and stop having to deal with the whole thing)? Yeah, it's ringing a bell. Well, there's some passing resemblance between Shakespeare's Prince of Denmark, the master of indecisiveness, and Arthur Clennam, master of passivity. It sort of makes sense that if we get a unconventional heroine in Amy Dorrit, we'd have to have a non-standard male protagonist as well. And boy, do we ever. Arthur is so the opposite of what we tend to think of as hero material that it's kind of funny. How so? Let's see. For one thing, he's old. Sure, not decrepit, walking-around-with-a-cane old, but still - 40! And what's more, even though he's two decades older than the leading men in so many other Victorian novels, he's got nothing to show for it. No money, no job prospects, not even any awesome life experience. It's like he was flash-frozen for twenty years and then thawed. For another thing, Arthur is totally ineffectual. He can't get anything done. It's actually pretty amazing to see just how often he fails. Trying to get some info about Little Dorrit out of his mom? Nothing. Trying to get Tattycoram back from Miss Wade? No go.

Getting to the bottom of Dorrit's debts? No results. Trying to interrogate Blandois and somehow stop his business with Clennam & Co.? No one even pretends to listen to him. Investigating the missing documents? He can't even find one clue. Investing money? He loses everything. By the time he is physically prevented from taking action by being locked up in the slammer, we have gotten so used to him being unable to accomplish anything that the scene raises the question: even if he were out of jail, what could he really do? Seriously, he is so passive and ineffectual that poor Amy is the one who has to propose to him!

Why is this guy our protagonist? And why is he surrounded on all sides by productive, energetic, and effective people? There's Doyce the awesome inventor, Meagles the super-duper businessman, Pancks the master sleuth, Cavalletto the optimistic jack-of-all-trades, and even Amy Dorrit herself, the indomitable go-getter. What would be different if Arthur too were a more functional person? Would he make a better partner for Doyce? For Amy?

c. Flintwinch

Initially Mrs. Clennam's servant, Flintwinch becomes a partner in Clennam & Co. He knows Mrs. Clennam's horrible secrets and uses them to gain power over her and the business.

Dickens tends to have at least one of these guys in every novel he writes. Which guys? Well, Shmoop's going to throw a couple of terms your way that are way helpful when talking about Dickens's minor characters: grotesque and monster. A grotesque is a character who generally inspires disgust in the reader (usually because of some extreme physical disfigurement), but whose underlying humanity creates some measure of empathy. We're talking guys like the hunchback of Notre Dame, the Beast from "Beauty and the Beast," or Frankenstein's monster (that's right - the doctor who made him is called Frankenstein, the monster himself has no name). Gross to look at? Sure. But so sweet once you get to know



him! A monster, on the other hand, is just as disgusting on the inside as on the outside. Basically, a monster is a grotesque without a heart, like Monty Bums from *The Simpsons*, or Smallweed from Dickens's own *Bleak House*, or... well, like dear old Flintwinch here. And what a horror this guy is. Not only does he look like his body has been screwed together incorrectly, and like he's about to be hanged by his odd neckerchief, but he is a bullying, angry old man. Flintwinch beats his half-deranged wife, Affery, tries to blackmail Mrs. Clennam, and finally steals all of Clennam & Co.'s money to vamoose to Amsterdam. But, wait, there's more! Flintwinch is also one of the novel's sinister twins, plotting his blackmail with his identical brother - another winner, who's in legal trouble for abusing a mentally disabled man under his care.

d. Henry Gowan

Henry Gowan has a devastating case of too-coolitis. He's hot, he's popular, and he's just wealthy enough not to need to work for a living. That gives him the kind of swagger that silly girls like spoiled Pet Meagles find so irresistible. The problem is that underneath that layer of good-cool lies a whole giant cesspool of bad-cool. Gowan is a member of the Barnacle family, who are high and mighty and run a lot of the country, kind of like the Kennedys or the Bushes. Sadly, though, he's never gotten a piece of that pie, and the bitter disappointment has made him do a weird kind of thing where he equalizes everyone and everything. Awesome things are just OK, and terrible things are also actually OK, and everything he sees and describes just exists in a state of perpetual meh. If that weren't enough, underneath the whole disaffected youth thing lies an even deeper, darker, scarier layer of rage. Gowan is probably the most passive-aggressive character in the novel. First, he takes money from his in-laws while totally bad-mouthing them and acting like he's too good for them. Then, he manages to convince everyone that he had to give up a lot to marry way beneath him, but that his love for his wife, Pet Meagles, overcame all those obstacles. And of course, he insists on making a fool out of Edmund Sparkler whenever he can after that imbecilic but otherwise sweet guy gets a shiny new Circumlocution Office job. What's most shocking though is a scene that seems almost out of place in this book. There isn't all that much violence in the novel. Even the ultra-evil Blandois seems more of a poisoner or otherwise sneaky killer than a guy who would beat the crap out of someone. So it's all the more shocking when suddenly, without much warning, Gowan beats and kicks his seemingly beloved dog Lion until it's bleeding profusely - and even then only stops when everyone around him begs him to. What are we to make of this horror? Why does no one call Gowan on this clearly wildly offensive treatment of his pet? (And it is offensive, even by the less squeamish animal-keeping standards of Victorian times.)

e. Mr. Pancks

Pancks is a great character. He doesn't seem like much at first, but he is one of the characters who actually changes and grows. Pancks, at the least at the beginning of the book, believes that man has no business but to do his business-which is business. He is the great capitalist, not Casby, nor Merdle: he advises Arthur to make as much money as he can honestly. Yet Pancks allows himself to be influenced by Arthur and Amy; he is in fact instrumental to the reversal in the Dorrit family fortunes that happens in the second half of the book. He ends the book by asserting his moral superiority to Casby, after having suffered pride before a fall through no fault of his own-except his own blindness by greed.



Discussion

Based on the findings of the character description of the main character in the movie Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens. In presenting the main character of the trend will discuss about the appearance, actions, thoughts, feelings, behaviors and ideals. The discussion of each of the findings are as follows:

a. Appearance

Amy Dorrit was born inside the Marshalsea prison, where everyone calls her Little Dorrit. The family is poor, so Amy tries to hire herself out as a seamstress. After she puts an ad in the window of the Plornishes' shop, Mrs. Clennam hires her for almost daily work. Somewhere along the way, Amy meets Maggy, a mentally disabled woman whom she takes care of.

At Mrs. Clennam's she meets Arthur Clennam and makes friends with him. Amy slaves away day and night to try to maintain her father's growing exaggerations about his life before prison. One day her father tries to indirectly, but really clumsily, get her to lead on John Chivery (the prison turnkey's son) a little bit so that Dorrit can keep getting little privileges from him.

b. Sense

Amy falls in love with Arthur. She then gets more sewing work from Flora Finching, Arthur's ex-fiancee, who is obsessed with getting back together with Arthur. Amy is sad to think that Arthur and Flora will be together and tells Maggy a fairy tale about a reclusive young woman who keeps a secret shadow in her house. The shadow goes away when the woman dies. At Flora's house Amy meets Pancks, whose hobby IS investigating genealogies. Soon Arthur tells Amy the results of Pancks's investigations into the Dorrit family - they are rich!

c. Action

A year later, Amy is traveling around Europe with her family, when the Dorrits run into Pet and Henry Gowan in the Alps. Amy correctly guesses that Arthur used to be in love with Pet. She writes him several letters about the Gowans and how Pet's marriage is going (poorly).

In Italy Dorrit is angry at Amy for her inability to adjust to being rich and still acting like she's in prison. Amy tries to be better, learns Italian, and tries to keep her sister from marrying the moronic Sparkler - to no avail. Eventually, after her family goes back to London, Amy is stuck taking care of her brother Tip, who is stricken with malaria.

d. Mind

Finally, she also returns to London, only to find that the Dorrits' wealth has disappeared with the financial collapse of Merdle. Amy takes care of Arthur in jail and visits her old friends. One day Mrs. Clennam finds her and tells her that Arthur's real mom was a dancer who died a long time ago, and that Mrs. Clennam held back a will that left Amy Dorrit a bunch of money.



e. Behavior and Goals

Amy proposes to Arthur by telling him that she is as poor as he is. Before they are married, she asks him to burn the will Mrs. Clennam has given back to her. She decides to eventually tell Arthur the deal with his family, but to leave out the part about the money.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the main character Amy Dorrit in Little Dorrit films concluded that Charles Dickens had described the woman's age of Victorian Age, women who are polite and caring towards her family. Little Dorrit exposes how detrimental English debtors' prisons proved to be for the families who were sent to live there indefinitely; however, such prisons had been abolished even before Dickens first began to write the story of "little" Amy Dorrit (who was born and raised in the confines of the famous Marshalsea debtors' prison). The following activities will help students dig deeper into Dickens' motivation for writing such a novel-if not for reform purposes, what does the legacy of imprisonment symbolize for Dickens' own past and for the lives of his characters? Clearly, one of the most significant messages of the novel seems to be that money-the key to escaping debtors' prison-does not magically lead characters to escape their own neuroses. In fact, money seems to have its own imprisoning power.

The main character in the film Little Dorrit is Amy Dorrit. Amy, otherwise known as Little Dorrit, lives in the Marshalsea Prison with her father, William, who is the prison's longest serving inmate. Although born and bred in the prison, Amy is far from being downtrodden and has grown up to be a gentle and kind-hearted yet enterprising and spirited young woman.

Amy became a major figure in this story because of the intensity of his presence from the beginning to the end of the story and has a relationship with each character in the story. Character that is in the main character is kind, merciful, modest, and polite. The writer analyzes the subordinate leaders such as attitudes, and actions to clarify the nature and affect the main character. These findings are very useful in education where a good woman must have kind, merciful, modest, and polite character.

REFERENCES

- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2003). *Film Art: An Introduction*. No copyright printed
- Collins, P. (2016). *Dickens and crime*. Springer.
- Obermier, T. F. (1990). *Characters of Charles Dickens*. No copyright printed
- Schwarzbach, F. S. (2002). *Newgate Novel to Detective Fiction*. A Companion to the Victorian Novel, 227-43.
- Scribner, M. P. (1980). *The house of the imagined past: Hawthorne, Dickens, and James*. The University of Arizona.
- Slifsgaard, A. (n.d). *Charles Dicken's Little Dorrit and Female Figures*. Retrieved July 20,2012 from World Wide Web: <http://www.sprog.auc.dk/~riber/female.html>
- Smith-Rosenberg, C. (1986). *Disorderly conduct: Visions of gender in Victorian America (Vol. 820)*. Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Taylor, J.R. (1997). *An Introduction to Error Analysis: The Study of Uncertainties in Physical Measurements*. 2nd Edition, University Science Books, Sausalito.
- Unstead, R. I. (1994). *Age of Machines: A Pictorial History 1815-1901*. London: Macdonald Educational



Wain, J. (1992). *Little Dorrit*. In Gross and Pearson, (Eds.), *Dickens and the Twentieth Century*. London: Routhledge and Keaga

Wall, S. (1990). *Charles Dickens*. London: Hazel Ratson and Viney Ltd

Women in the Victorian Age: The Degradation of Married Women in the Victorian Era (n.d.)

Retrieved July 20, 2012 from the World Wide Web:

<http://www.gober.net/Victorian/bib/html>.

