

# **SOCIAL INEQUALITY REFLECTED IN TRACY CHEVALIER'S *GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING***

## **Status Conflict Caused By Broken Stereotype and Expected Role**

Indah Zumrotun

Faculty of Humanity, Diponegoro University

### **ABSTRAK**

*“Girl with a Pearl Earring”* adalah novel karya Tracy Chevalier yang mengangkat kisah tentang seorang pembantu rumah tangga yang melawan majikannya untuk mempertahankan kebenaran dan kehormatannya. Hal yang menjadi fokus utama pengkajian novel ini adalah identifikasi stereotype dan peran sosial pekerja kelas bawah (dalam hal ini pembantu) dan simbol perbedaan status yang dilawan oleh tokoh utama dalam novel sehingga menimbulkan konflik antara pembantu dan majikan. Untuk menganalisis pokok masalah tersebut penulis menggunakan metode kontekstual dengan pendekatan sosiologi berdasarkan teori Stereotype, Simbol dan Status. Teori Status yang akan diterapkan dalam proses pengkajian novel adalah teori Max Weber. Tujuan dari pemilihan topik ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi perbedaan status antara kelas atas dan kelas bawah serta konflik status yang dapat ditimbulkan. Dari hasil analisis pengkajian konflik status tersebut dapat disimpulkan bahwa tatanan stereotype suatu kelas sosial yang berlaku dalam masyarakat berhubungan dengan perbedaan status dari anggota kelas sosial tersebut. Hubungan sosial ini tidak selalu dapat berjalan dengan baik karena akan ada saatnya terjadi konflik ketika salah satu kelas sosial melakukan penyimpangan stereotype dan peran sosial yang menjadi pembeda status seseorang dengan yang lain.

*Kata Kunci: stereotype, konflik status, symbol status, pembantu rumah tangga, majikan*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literature is not only about something printed, but literature is a fiction as a form of imagination that can explore such an expression and emotion to amuse the reader (Wellek and Warren, 1949). There are many kinds of literary works such as drama,

prose and poetry. As the object of the study, the writer will use prose to explore how a literary work can reflect the society through its story.

One problem in our society which is usually brought up in a literary work is the problem of social interaction related to the social inequality or social stratification. In social life, there is term of 'class' which is used to rank social categories within a system of economic stratification (Wright, 2003). Based on the social rank or class, people usually treat the others differently regarding their financial situation, status, education, religion, and even race (Taniesha Woods et al, 2005). This situation creates kind of stereotypes to judge people and discriminate a man to the others. Furthermore, the 'class' does not only differentiate the stereotypes of a group but also clearly categorizes its social role.

The story of the novel *Girl with A Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier tells about a girl from a lower class who experiences status conflict with her mistress because she is different from the stereotypes of her role as the lower class. This story contains the problem of social stratification, stereotypes and social role which lead to status conflict between a maid and a mistress. However, this thesis will use sociological approach of stereotype, status symbol and Max Weber's theory of Social Inequality related to the issue of status conflict. Besides, the writer will also analyze the intrinsic elements of the novel to support the explanation of the extrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements will focus on character and conflict.

## **METHODS OF RESEARCH**

The writer uses library research as the research method of this thesis. George defines library research as "an investigation involving accepted facts, unknowns, speculation, logical procedures rigorously applied, verification, evaluation, repetition, and ultimately an interpretation of findings that extends understanding" (George, 22-23:2008). The writer uses library research for collecting all data, information, theories, and other references which are needed in completing this thesis.

In analysing the status conflict between the maid and her mistress characters in the novel, the writer will use contextual method by using sociological approach. According to Behrendt, contextual method "means situating the text within the

milieu of its times and assessing the roles of author, readers (intended and actual), and commentators (critics, both professional and otherwise) in the reception of the text” (Behrendt, 2008). The use of sociological approach will be started with the issue of stereotyping and status symbol as the causes of the status conflict reflected in the object of this thesis. Meanwhile, the discussion of status conflict will use Max Weber’s Social Inequality theory.

## **SOCIAL INEQUALITY**

Literary works cannot only be analyzed by using intrinsic elements but it can be also analyzed using extrinsic elements. According to Wellek and Warren, extrinsic elements of literature “attempt to interpret literature in the light of its social context and its antecedents (1949: 65)”. Wallek and Warren adds that there are five extrinsic approaches that can be used in literature. Those approaches are biographical approach, psychological approach, sociological approach, literature and ideas, and literature and the others arts

### **Social Stratification**

The sociological approach in this thesis will appoint the issue of social inequality. It is usually related to the rank of people which is represented by the term of ‘class’. Social inequality represented in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* will be analyzed using the theory of a German sociologist, Max Weber. Max Weber has a consideration that class can be related not only to economy but also status as well as status honor.

In contrast to the purely economically determined “class situation”, we wish to designate as *status situation* every typical component of the life of men that is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of *honor*...But status honor need not necessarily be linked with a class situation. (Weber, 1978: 932)

According to Max Weber social stratification does not only stratify people based on their ‘class’ or economic situation. Wright writes that “class is part of a broader multidimensional schema of stratification in Weber in which the most central contrast is between ‘class’ and ‘status’ (Wright, 2003: 5).

There are three major concepts of social stratification in Weber’s theory, those are ‘class’, ‘status’ and ‘party’. Status means “an affective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges” (Weber, 1978: 305). Status and class

have a close correlation to each other because people in an upper class usually have a higher status as well. Status may be determined by a class position but it is not identical by it (Weber, 1978: 306).

Status of a person can be typically founded on his style of life (life style), formal education and hereditary or occupational prestige. In its practice, status is usually expressed through connubium (marriage), commensality, monopolistic appropriation of privileged modes of acquisition or the abhorrence of certain kinds of acquisition, and status conventions (traditions) of other kinds (Weber, 1978: 306). Weber himself put a special explanation about how lifestyle (the main cause of the status conflict in the novel) influences the boundaries of status and status honor in society,

...a central guide to social conduct in the form of a distinctive traditional ethic re-enforced by education; this ethic made personal relations central to the style of life and impressed every individual with the obligations of a status honor that was jointly held and thus a unifying bond for the status group as a whole. (Weber, 1978: 1068)

Regarding the discussion of status, J. Dwi Narwoko and Bagong Suyanto distinguish status into two categories, those are ascribed status and achieved status. Ascribed status is status that is obtained by a person because of heredity or in the other words a man inherits the status from his family. Otherwise, achieved status is status that is obtained by a person by doing some efforts (2004: 157). Moreover, in order to affirm their status people need to do some roles. It is because the function of status and role cannot be separated to each other, "status indicates someone's position in society, while the role shows the dynamic aspect of the status, it is kind of expected behavior of a certain individual who occupies a particular status" (Narwoko and Suyanto, 2004: 156).

There are two kinds of role according to Narwoko and Suyanto, those are expected roles and actual roles. Expected roles are those roles which the implementation is done by considering some assessments from society. Meanwhile, the actual roles are roles that the implementation is more flexible than the expected roles and can be adjusted with the situation of the society (2004: 160).

Furthermore, in every relationship, including gap between social groups, conflict is very possible to happen. Weber said that “a social relationship will be referred to as ‘conflict’ insofar as action is oriented intentionally to carrying out the actor's own will against the resistance of the other party or parties (1978:38).” The quotation implies that a conflict may happen if an individual is doing something that against the others in different social stratification. It means that different status in social relationship may cause a status conflict as well. The status conflict can happen if one person or more from a certain status group make such a confrontation with one person or more from another status.

### **Stereotype**

Greenwald and Banaji defines stereotype as a socially shared set of beliefs about traits that are characteristic of members of a social category. Whereas an attitude implies a consistent evaluative response to its object, a stereotype may encompass beliefs with widely diverging evaluative implications. (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995:11). The action of stereotyping can be distinguished based on several categories such as gender, race, poverty, and class. However, stereotype does not only provide the information of the quality of someone’s character but also the social role of the group’s member. Those qualities will affect emotional reactions which may arise between the members (Dovidio et al, 2010: 7). However, according to Andersen, it can be identified that the stereotypes of upper class are snooty, phony, ambitious, striving and obsessing. Whereas, the stereotypes of the lower class are inherently violent, dirty, and incapable (Andersen, 2008:276).

In this thesis, the theory of stereotyping is used to identify the stereotypes of upper class and the lower class in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier. The stereotyping will be based on class, but it leads to the stereotype of character and role of mistress as the upper class member and maid as the lower class member. Thus, it can be known how the member of a lower class should act and do their role in front of the upper class and how it can cause a conflict.

### **Status Symbol**

Stereotype helps society differs one’s characters to the others according to their membership in a certain group. In order to emphasize those stereotypes as the limit

of someone's existence in his social group, society may create some symbols. Generally, the symbol is used to show, represent and remark something. According to Guerin, symbol may be formed in certain object or incident which can have an implicit meaning in its existence within poem, story, or play. Symbol may engage the value inside the literary work and the value in real life (outside the work) (Guerin, 2004:106). Since this study is discussing the issue of social inequality regarding status conflict, there is a term of 'status symbol'. Narwoko and Suyanto define 'status symbol' as certain characteristic of someone's status that can be found through the his daily life such as the way he dresses, associates, chooses where to live, and so on (Narwoko and Suyanto, 2004: 158).

However, the status symbol in this novel is used to clarify the stereotypes of the upper class and the lower class and to remark the different status of woman as a mistress (high status) and woman as a maid (low status). The status symbol in this novel is formed in an object (pearl) that can be identified through the way the mistress and the maid should dress.

### **SOCIAL INEQUALITY REFLECTED IN TRACY CHEVALIER'S *GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING*: STATUS CONFLICT CAUSED BY BROKEN STEREOTYPES AND EXPECTED ROLE**

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* contains external conflict which happens between Griet and Catharina related to their relationship with Johannes Vermeer and Van Ruijven. The conflict between Griet and Catharina is identified as status conflict, a maid and a mistress, in a households. Griet is represented as the lower class than Catharina based on economic situation which means that Catharina's status is higher than her. Otherwise, there are some deviations in some cases regarding their status. This uncommon situation causes status conflict between them.

#### **The Status Stratification**

According to Max Weber's theory which has been explained in the previous chapter, status may be led by economic situation and it may rest on class position. In addition, status stratification itself can be identified based on several

determinants such as wealth, inheritance or hereditary prestige, lifestyle and formal education.

The first determinant of status stratification is wealth or economic situation. Class stratification in *Girl with a Pearl Earring* is classified in three types, those are upper class, middle class and lower class. Van Ruijven is the upper class, Johannes Vermeer and Catharina as the middle class, and Griet as the lower class.

Van Ruijven is in upper class than Vermeer's family because Van Ruijven is the patron of Mr. Vermeer. The representation of Van Ruijven as the upper class can be seen from the conversation between Maria Thins and Griet when they are talking about Van Ruijven who asks Mr. Vermeer to paint Griet. In this case Maria Thins explains that it will be difficult for Mr. Vermeer to refuse Van Ruijven's order since Van Ruijven is his patron, "...Van Ruijven is his patron, and a wealthy and powerful man. We cannot afford to offend him" (Chevalier, 1999:157). It clearly shows that Van Ruijven's class and status is higher than Mr. Vermeer. Whereas, middle class is represented by Vermeer's family which consists of Johannes Vermeer, Catharina and Maria Thins,

I was chopping vegetables in the kitchen when I heard voices outside our front door—a woman's, bright as polished brass, and a man's, low and dark like the wood of the table I was working on. They were the kind of voices we heard rarely in our house. I could hear rich carpets in their voices, books and pearls and fur. (Chevalier, 1999: 3)

Mr. and Mrs. Vermeer come to Griet's house for recruiting Griet as their maid. The statement "They were the kind of voices we heard rarely in our house. I could hear rich carpets in their voices, books and pearls and fur" clearly implies that Mr. and Mrs. Vermeer is in upper class than Griet, especially when Griet then becomes Vermeer's maid. Meanwhile, in page 11 there is statement, "...they knew what happened to families when a man lost his trade. It would be something to discuss later—young Griet become a maid, her father brought the family low" (Chevalier, 1999:11) obviously shows that Griet is in the lower class than Johannes Vermeer, Catharina and Van Ruijven.

Based on the explanation above it can be concluded that Van Ruijven is in the highest class, Vermeer's family is in the middle class since the family is in lower

class than Van Ruijven, and Griet is in the lowest class because she works as a maid in Vermeer's family.

The second determinant is inheritance or hereditary prestige. In this factor, a person may claim their status by inheriting it from his parents. Based on the class stratification above, Catharina gets her status from her mother and her marriage relationship with Johannes Vermeer. Catharina is identified in higher status than Griet since Catharina is the daughter of Maria Thins, the owner of the house where Vermeer's family live. It is confirmed by the statement of one of Catharina's daughter to Griet in the day Griet arrives in that house for the first time...“Our grandmother's is Maria. Maria Thins. This is her house” (Chevalier, 1999: 15). However, Griet also gets her status as the lower class and maid because of the situation of her parents. This means that Catharina's status as the mistress and Griet status as the maid is identified as ascribed status. Furthermore, this determinant shows that Catharina's status as the mistress is higher than Griet's status.

The next determinant is life style since there are stereotypes of upper and lower class regarding lifestyle as discussed in sub-chapter Status Symbol. Regarding lifestyle, there is a stereotype that a lower class, especially maid for this case, usually does not wear kind of fur, satin, and jewels.

“After a moment he called up to me. When I appeared he said, “Griet, get my wife's yellow mantle, and her pearl necklace and earrings...Instead I went to Maria Thins in the Crucifixion room, who unlocked Catharina's jewelry box and handed me the necklace and earrings. Then I got out the mantle from the cupboard in the great hall, shook it out and folded it carefully over my arm. I had never touched it before. I let my nose sink into the fur—it was very soft, like a baby rabbit's. (Chevalier, 1999: 127-128)

Mr. Vermeer's statement when he asks Griet to get Catharina's fur mantle and pearl jewels in order to use them as the property for painting implies that those luxurious things are belongs to Catharina. Otherwise, Griet's statement “I had never touched it before. I let my nose sink into the fur” implies that those things have ever been belongs to her. This comparison emphasizes the status line between Griet and Catharina based on their lifestyle.



The last determinant is the education background. There is stereotype that a maid is believed as the one who lacks in education. In fact, Griet is lack in education as written in the novel, “I prayed he would not ask me to write something, as he had van Ruijven’s wife. My father had taught me to write my name, but little else...” (Chevalier, 1999:131). It shows that Griet does not really know how to write which implies that she lacks in education.

### **Stereotype**

The characterization of Van Ruijven, Johannes Vermeer and Catharina as the upper class is suitable with the stereotypes of upper class in society, those are snooty, phony, and ambitious. The snooty character, for example, can be seen in Catharina attitudes towards her maid. One of Catharina’s maid once said, “She just orders us about because she feels she has to” (Chevalier, 1999: 50). It implies that Catharina is snooty as she orders her maid just because she realizes that her position in the household makes her has a right to do that.

The phony character is reflected in Van Ruijven’s character. Van Ruijven is described as a wealthy and powerful person but his “intentions are never honourable when it comes to young women” (Chevalier, 1999: 157). It implies that Van Ruijven is phony because his deplorable attitude towards women is in contrast with his esteemed status. The phony characteristic is also represented by Johannes Vermeer family which seems to be wealthy but experiences financial difficulties. The family, especially Catharina, may manage to have some luxurious dresses like satin, fur and pearl but they can be short in money to pay more servants for their households.

...“With a big house like this, and your mistress’s wealth, and the master’s paintings,” I added, “could they not afford another maid? Or a cook?” “Huh,” Tanneke snorted. “They can barely manage to pay you.” I was surprised—the coins amounted to so little in my hand each week. It would take me years of work to be able to buy something as fine as the yellow mantle that Catharina kept so carelessly folded in her cupboard. It did not seem possible that they could be short of money. (Chevalier, 1999: 49-50)

The ambitious character can be seen in Van Ruijven through the way he wants Griet, “And you know, I will have you anyway when I get that painting”

(Chevalier, 1999: 202). In addition, Johannes Vermeer's passion in painting can also be identified as ambitious character because he wants to be a perfectionist painter. It is implied in Maria Thin's saying, "He doesn't paint just what he sees, but what will suit," (Chevalier, 1999:36). Besides, the explanation in sub-chapter character that Mr. Vermeer even uses special stuff to pay close attention to his paintings also reinforces his ambition.

On the other hand, there are some stereotypes of lower class which are represented by Griet as a maid character. However, the stereotypes of lower class such as bad in manner, dirty and incapable are suitable with what is written in the novel.

She did not look at me, but I knew she was thinking that maids were not to be trusted with pearls... She handed me some coins, my wages for the days I had worked. "Off you go now, to tell your mother all about us, I suspect."(Chevalier, 1999:43, 45)

"Stealing and tempting the master of the house—that was what mistresses were always looking for in maids" (Chevalier, 1999: 141)

I prayed he would not ask me to write something, as he had van Ruijven's wife. My father had taught me to write my name, but little else. (Chevalier, 1999:131)

Those quotations shows the stereotypes of the maid that is identified as them who is untrustworthy, they can gossip their master life and will be stealing and tempting their master. Moreover, maid is stereotyped to be incapable or lack in education as Griet said that she do not learn much about writing. Maid is also characterized to never wear valuable thing like pearl. "Sir," I began, gripping the hard, cool carving, "I cannot do it." "Do what, Griet?" He was genuinely surprised. "What you are going to ask me to do. I cannot wear it. Maids do not wear pearls." (Chevalier, 1999: 194).

However, stereotypes do not only reflect the characters of people from certain social group but also provide the beliefs of their social role. Based on the explanation in the previous chapter, this stereotypes of role can be classified as the expected role of maid. It can be concluded from *Girl with A Pearl Earring* that a

maid roles are the obligations to do what her master tells her to do and not to interfere in her master's business.

In the narration of the novel Griet once said, "But he was my master. I was meant to do as he said" (Chevalier, 1999:57). That statement clearly confirms and emphasizes the stereotype of role that a maid should do whatever her master tells her to do. Another social role of maid is that a maid should not interfere in her master's business. It is confirmed by the quotation below which is taken from the conversation between Griet and another maid named Tanneke. Griet wants to know about the past story of Catharina and her brother but Tanneke emphasizes that it is not something to be known for a maid like them.

"Tell me about what happened when Catharina's brother came here last...For a moment Tanneke sat up straighter, until she remembered who was asking. "That's not your business," she snapped. "That's family business, not for the likes of you."(Chevalier, 1999:134)

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* contains the story between the upper class and the lower class. The characters in this novel does not only characterized based on their images created by the author, but they also represent the characteristic of people in upper and lower class. The characteristic based on their membership in certain social group can be identified by stereotypes. This stereotypes then helps to identify the expected roles of Griet, the main character of the novel.

### **Status Symbol**

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* contains a status symbol that is pearl. Pearl symbolizes class discrepancy because it differentiates the status between maid and the mistress. It is believed that something valuable and expensive such as pearl, fur, and satin are kind of women dresses which can be only wore by mistresses or women from upper and middle class.

She (Van Ruijven's wife) wore a mantle of rich yellow satin trimmed with white ermine, and a fashionable five-pointed red ribbon in her hair. A window lit her from the left, falling across her face and tracing the delicate curve of her forehead and nose. She was tying a string of pearls around her neck, holding the ribbons up, her hands suspended in the air... "What you are going to ask me to do. I cannot wear it. Maids do not wear pearls."(Chevalier, 1999: 36, 195)

Griet's description about the painting of Van Ruijven's wife is in contrast with her situation. When she is being painted by Mr. Vermeer, Van Ruijven's wife has beautiful and valuable dresses like fur, satin, and pearl with her. Though, Griet feels that she cannot do the same because of the different status between her and Van Ruijven's wife. From the comparison of the two quotations, it is known that both of Griet and Van Ruijven's wife are being painted by Mr. Vermeer, but Van Ruijven's wife deserves to wear pearl and satin while Griet does not. Although maid and mistress are women, but it is known that pearl is not something that belongs to the maid. Still, the maid in this novel is forced by her master to wear it. This deviation of pearl is a symbol that leads to become the big conflict of the story.

### **Status Conflict Caused by Broken Stereotype and Expected Role**

The conflict in this novel is more about status problems between Catharina and Griet that are caused by broken stereotypes and expected roles. Since the first time Griet arrives in Vermeer's family, Catharina has already disliked and felt uneasy towards her. Griet realizes it and she has stated it in the narration, "I avoided Catharina when I could. It had been clear from the moment she'd seen me chopping vegetables in my mother's kitchen that she disliked me" (Catharina, 1999: 49). Then, Catharina's feeling towards Griet is becoming worse and worse. It is because Griet has an authority to maintain her husband important painting studio while she has not, as quoted below,

She was jealous of me. I had cleaned the studio, where she was not allowed, where no one, it seemed, could go except me and Maria Thins. . . . She would not come into the room to look at the painting. It seemed she never entered the studio. . . . That's why master won't allow her in his room unless he's there. . . . (Chevalier, 1999:38, 41, 55)

Based on that statement, it can be said that Griet has already knew Catharina's attitude towards her. Griet assumes that Catharina's jealousy is caused by her authority in Mr. Vermeer precious painting studio. Griet is allowed entering and maintaining the studio while Catharina, Mr. Vermeer's wife, is not allowed to and it seems that she never enters the studio.

This situation makes Griet has some conflicts with the member of Vermeer's family. When Griet has been slandered for stealing Catharina's comb, almost all members of the Vermeer family believe that Griet steal the comb. Though, Mr. Vermeer helps Griet to prove her innocent. As the result, although Griet does not steal the comb, Maria Thins thinks that she has managed "to make a few enemies" in Vermeer's family. Most of the family members hate Griet and have conflict with her. In that family, Griet is a maid but in some cases she can be more powerful than her mistress, Catharina, because Catharina's husband, Mr. Vermeer, seems to be in Griet's side all the time. It indicates that there is a status deviation arises in the story.

However, that situation then leads to the stereotype of maid that maid is stealing and tempting her master as it is shown, "stealing and tempting the master of the house—that was what mistresses were always looking for in maids" (Chevalier, 1999: 141). Though, this stereotype is broken because of the fact that Griet neither steals the comb nor tempts her master as Catharina thinks.

In this part, it can be seen that the situation aims to status conflict in Vermeer's household. At first, Catharina just envy with Griet because of Griet's allowance to be in Mr. Vermeer's painting studio which means that Mr. Vermeer will spent much more time with Griet in the painting studio than with her. Even, this case has already indicates that as Mr. Vermeer's wife, Catharina is one step behind Griet. Then, Catharina becomes more jealousy and envy when Mr. Vermeer is in Griet's side for the comb incident, so the status conflict between mistress and her maid become increasingly visible. This assumption is reinforced with the quotation below which implies that Catharina seems to fear Griet,

Some things changed for me in the house after the trouble with the comb. Catharina's treatment of me was the greatest surprise. I had expected that she would be even more difficult than before—give me more work, berate me whenever she could, make me as uncomfortable as possible. Instead she seemed to fear me. (Chevalier, 1999: 149)

In addition to the stereotype that maids will definitely tempt and steal their master and the fact that Mr. Vermeer support Griet in comb incident, Catharina thinks and assumes that Griet has tempted and stole Mr. Vermeer from her.

After that incident, Griet is being slandered again. It happens when Van Ruijven, the patron of Johannes Vermeer, is being attracted to her. He wants Johannes Vermeer to paint her and Mr. Vermeer can't refuse the order as Van Ruijven is a powerful person. Griet tries to refuse but once again it is not her who can make the choice. When painting Griet, Mr. Vermeer has Griet wearing a pearl earring which belongs to Catharina. This is absolutely a big problem when Catharina finds it. As this problem is not her fault, although she is a maid, Griet cannot admit that this is her fault as Catharina wants her to do... "No, madam." Although I knew it would be easier for everyone if I said I had stolen them, I could not lie about myself. "Don't lie to me. Maids steal all the time. You took my earrings!" (1999: 213)

It will be easier if Griet just admits that she has stolen the pearl since she is also a maid who has been stereotyped as someone who will steal. Though, Griet chooses to break her stereotype and expected role as a maid again by saying "NO" to her mistress.

Moreover, this pearl earring incident causes the status conflict between Catharina as a mistress and Griet as Catharina's maid. It has been explained before that lifestyle is one of the status determinants. Wearing pearl in this novel is kind of a lifestyle of upper class woman. Besides, pearl in this novel becomes a status symbol that differs the status of mistress and maid. Although Griet and Catharina are women, but they are different in class and status so the right for wearing the pearl is different as well. When Griet finally wears the pearl earrings, especially Catharina's pearl earring, it indirectly implies the broken line which separates Catharina's status as the mistress in Vermeer's household.

Another status determinants which is also broken is the formal education factor. As mentioned in the literary review, the formal education factor in status discussion is divided in two categories, those are empirical training or rational instruction and the corresponding forms of behavior. In this novel, it can be said that Griet learns and gets some knowledge in painting while assisting Mr. Vermeer in his painting studio. In addition, Mr. Vermeer and Griet also shares the same interest in painting arts since Griet was also a daughter of tile painter.

He gave me instructions in the morning and expected them to be done by the next day. The colors themselves made up for the troubles I had hiding what I was doing. I came to love grinding the things he brought from the apothecary—bones, white lead, madder, massicot— to see how bright and pure I could get the colors. . . From him I learned too how to wash substances to rid them of impurities and bring out the true colors. (Chevalier, 1999:108)

Griet's narration above regarding her activity in assisting her master. It also has been explained in the discussion of Griet's character that by the day Griet works in Mr. Vermeer's painting studio, Griet is asked to assist Mr. Vermeer because she can make Mr. Vermeer paints faster. It directly implies that Griet can learn and improve her ability in painting. This improvement of Griet's ability in painting is also being acknowledge by Mr. Vermeer. When Griet tells Mr. Vermeer her opinion about one of his painting, Mr. Vermeer said that he had not thought he would learn something from a maid (Chevalier, 1999: 136).

The fact that Griet can learn and even gives some opinion to Mr. Vermeer's painting is the form of broken stereotypes of maids that maid may incapable in improving themselves. Otherwise, it also breaks formal education factor as one of status determinant in this novel.

### **The impacts of the Status Conflict**

In every conflict there must be a party which is harmed more than the others. However, the status conflict between Griet and Catharina ends with Griet is being accused of stealing Catharina's pearl earring and tempting Mr. Vermeer. Mr. Vermeer and Maria Thins actually know the truth, but they do not tell Catharina about it. In this novel, as the impact of the conflict, Griet chooses to leave Vermeer family. It is done to defend her honor and the truth because she does not steal the pearl and tempt Mr. Vermeer. Yet, there is no one in the family believes in her and wants to defend her including her master who actually knows the truth.

Suddenly she groaned. Flinging the knife away, she clutched her belly... I looked up and met his eye, holding his grey gaze for a long moment. I knew it was for the last time. I did not look at anyone else. In his eyes I thought I could see regret. I did not pick up the knife. I turned and walked from the room, down the stairs and through the doorway, (Chevalier, 1999:215)

Catharina is angry with Griet for wearing her pearl earring and then she throws a blade to Griet. The blade falls in Griet's feet and as a maid in Vermeer's family, Griet should pick the blade but she does not. At last, Griet runs away from Vermeer's family and what she does can be identified as a rebellion from the lower class toward the upper class.

Ten years later after the incident, Griet who already has a new life is called to come to the Vermeer's house. As the death comes to her master, her master has a last will to give Griet the pearl earring she has worn a long time ago. He asks Catharina for that and it is stated through Catharina says, "He has decided for you, and for me. They are yours now, so take them. This act of giving the pearl earring symbolizes that Mr. Vermeer wants to prove Griet's innocent for the last incident. Besides, it also symbolizes that after getting the pearl earring Griet is free as a maid. "... A maid came free." (Chevalier, 1999: 232-233)...that is how Griet can clean up her name and be free as a maid. However, Griet's status as a free-man is identified as achieved status since she gets this status with some efforts in order to protect her honor.

## **CONCLUSION**

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier is a story that brings up the issue of social inequality. It tells about a girl named Griet from the lower class who has status conflict with her mistress as she breaks her stereotypes and expected roles as a maid. This conflict begins when Griet has an authority to maintain the precious painting studio of her master, Mr. Vermeer while her mistress, Catharina, is not allowed to enter it. The jealousy of Catharina makes her gives difficulties to Griet. In the end of the story, when Griet is forced to wear Catharina's pearl earring she is slandered for stealing the pearl and tempting Mr. Vermeer. This problem of pearl earring then leads to a status problem because pearl in this novel is the status symbol which differs the status of Catharina and Griet. As the result, Griet rebels to protect her honor since she is not stealing the pearl or tempting her master.

The two majors of intrinsic elements in this novel such as characters and conflict are used to raise the status conflict of the story. The status conflict itself can be analyzed by using the theory of Max Weber, stereotypes and status symbol.



As the result of the analysis, it can be identified the stereotypes and role of maid as the lower class which become the cause of class conflict in this novel. However, this novel implies that in society there is class stratification which has stereotypes and social role for each. Once the stereotype is broken it may cause social conflict when each class makes such a confrontation.

*Girl with a Pearl Earring* contains a moral value that a person may be judged as a bad one but it does not mean that he is bad. Besides, every person has a right to protect their honor, get an equal treatment from the others and as human we have to be honest in everything we do.

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