SOCIAL STRATIFICATION REFLECTED AT JANE AUSTEN’S

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE NOVEL (1813):

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

PUBLICATION ARTICLES

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SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA

2014
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ABSTRACT

MEI HARIYANTI, A. 320 100 203. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION REFLECTED AT JANE AUSTEN’S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE NOVEL: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH. RESEARCH PAPER. MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA. 2014.

The aim of this research is to analyze social stratification reflected at Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice novel (1813) by using a sociological approach. The objectives of the study are to analyze novel based on its structural elements and to analyze the novel based on the sociological approach, by identifying the relation between the novel and the social background of the early nineteenth century in English society based on sociological approach. This research paper belongs to a qualitative research. The sources of the data are both primary data source, which is Pride and Prejudice novel and secondary data sources, the other sources related to the analysis such as books of literary theory of sociological approach and virtual references. The method of data collection is documentation research. The technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis. Based on the analysis, the researcher draws some conclusions. Firstly, based on the structural analysis of the novel it can be concluded that in Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen conveys a moral message that some people use marriage to lift up their social economic status. Secondly, based on the sociological analysis, it can be concluded that in Pride and Prejudice Jane Austen reflects the social realities of the English society including social, economic, political, science and technology, cultural and religious aspect at late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

Key words: social stratification, Pride and Prejudice, Sociological approach.
A. INTRODUCTION

*Pride and Prejudice* novel by Jane Austen is a romance novel. It has described clearly the condition of English social life in early 19th century such as social class and marriage. It was originally titled *First Impression* because the appearances of the characters of the characters created the plot of the novel. However, the novel is also concerned with the effects of the character’s first impression, which is their prejudice; Austen finally found the title *Pride and Prejudice* more appropriate. *Pride and Prejudice* was far more fortunate than its earlier incarnation and it was published to the world on January 28, 1813. This novel belongs to Romantic Period between 1800-1850, which is signed with France Revolution.

There are some of literature review related to *Pride and Prejudice* can be divided into two categories, namely movie and novel by Jane Austen. The researcher of movie is Sofia Fitrianingsih, Dimas Nur Baladi, and Viona Evy Rachmawaty. The researcher of novel is Vima Setiyawati and Ayu Fauziah Sofy Citra Anggista. The last researcher Axioma Dany Imamasari, is about comparison between novel and movie *Pride and Prejudice*. But the researcher in here tries to analyze this novel again but in different theory. The researcher want to analyze social stratification using sociological approach.

This research paper concerning about social stratification. Social stratification is a distinction or grouping of members of the community as a vertical (rise). According to Pitirim A. Sorokin (2005:60) social stratification is a difference in the population / society into layers in stratified class (hierarchical). Pitirim A. Sorokin in his essay entitled "Social Stratification"
said the coating system in the community is a common characteristic of a fixed and regular life in society. Meanwhile, according to Max Weber (Harold. R. Kerbo, 2006:229), social stratification is the classification of people who belong to a particular social system into hierarchical layers according to the dimensions of power, privilege and prestige. But, according to Astried S. Susanto (1983: 98) social stratification is the result of human relationships habits regularly and structured so that every person, every moment has to do with the situation that determines the vertically or horizontally in the community.

Talking about social stratification, it can’t be separated from sociology. Sociology of literature is basically aimed to analyze literature work in terms of the author’s social status, the availability of markets, the stipulation of type’s publication, and the structure of the leaders (Laurensen and Swingewood, 1972:14). According to Wellek and Warren (1977: 94), literature reserve about life and life, in most part, is part of the real society. A literary work exists because of society; the existence of literary work is influenced by the condition and phenomenon in society either in social, economy, politic, science and technology, culture, and religious aspect. According to Laurenson and Swingwood (1972: 13), there are three types of sociology of literature: literary work as the social documents, literary work as reflection of social situaton of the writer, literary works as the manifestation from the historical moment.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

While analyzing the novel, the writer uses qualitative research. According to Anderson and Taylor (2009), qualitative research typically
involves fieldwork in which the researcher observes and records behavior and events in their natural setting. The data sources are library and literary data. Its purposes is to analyze using sociological approach. The object of the study is to analyze the social stratification of English society reflected in *Pride and Prejudice* novel (1813) on a sociological approach. The writer uses two data sources, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data source of the study is the novel *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen. The secondary data source from many sources as references, the author’s biography, the website from the internet about this novel and other resources that support the analysis. The analysis is begun from the structural analysis of the work and finally the sociological analysis of the literary of literary works. The steps analyzing the data as follows: first, analyzing the data based on its structural elements. Second, analyzing the data based on sociological analysis.

C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Novel as a literary work reflects the social reality which is seen from social aspect, economic aspect, political aspect, science and technology aspect, cultural aspect, and religious aspect.

1. Social Aspect

The social class in England in the nineteenth century is influenced by the industrial revolution. As Perkin (1969) has observed, "the Industrial Revolution was no mere sequence of changes in industrial techniques and production, but a social revolution with social causes as well as profound social effects". The impact of industrial revolution had a great influence especially in forming of the structure of the society (McKay, Hill and Buckler,
In the nineteenth century, the structure of the society consists of third major classes in England. They are upper class, middle class, and lower class (working class). But Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* only reflects two structure of the society, the upper class and middle class.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen shows that Darcy family belongs to the upper class. It can be seen from their estate, snobbish life style. They stay at the large estate and they have company. The income also identifies the social status of someone. The higher someone’s income the higher social status she or he gets in society. The income identifies Darcy’s social status. Fitzwilliam Darcy is annual income is ten thousands pounds.

Another character belonging to the upper class is Bingley family. Mr. Bingley is Darcy’s closest friend. He always holds the dancing party. He is categorized based on his wealthy. His wealthy got from inheritances property to the amount from his father. As a part of Bingley family, she thinks that wearing an elegant gown in every party at ball so important to determine her social status. She feels that it shows one’s pride and position in society.

Lady Catherine de Bourgh family also represents the upper class. She is Darcy’s aunt. Like the other upper class family, they dwell at the elite estate, which is known Rosings park. It is a beautiful modern building house at England.

From the analysis above, Jane Austen wants to portray that the upper class usually stay in the luxurious and elite estate. It is also completed with a beautiful park in front of the house as a symbol of their social status.
The middle classes are represented by Bennet’s family and William Collins. It is categorized based on their income and their profession. Bennet’s family consists of Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet and their five unmarried daughters. They live in Longbourn, the small town in England. Bennet’s income is two thousands a year.

William Collins is a Clergyman. During Austen’s time, clergyman in the Church of England increasingly came from the middle class. The occupation was viewed as a learned and prestigious profession and providing a moderate income. Actually, the lifestyle of the middle class is almost the same as the upper class. They like to go to important places where many people are gathering such as attending the dancing parties.

Jane Austen also draws the class distinction which is in fact very rigid at her time. The upper class also shows their identity to the society. They do not want to be similar with the other class. Their performances are elegant and luxurious. They like to have the distinction of rank preserved.

There are distinctions among the landed classes that are determined by the amount of wealth possessed by the members. In this novel, for instance Miss Bingley and her sister underestimate Bennet’s family because they are not wealthy compared to them. This situation is shown when Miss Elizabeth visited her old sister in Netherfield.

2. Economic Aspect

In the sixties and early seventies of last country, the British economy was one of the fastest growing in the world. Condition were unusually
favourable at that time in all of its great departments, in agriculture, industry, transport and foreign trade, for an exceptionally wide and rapid advance in output and incomes (Court, 1965: 3). The new industrialist and traders were gradually rising as class, but had still not won the right vote. Jane Austen creates the character of Mr. Gardiner to reflect that. He is in business and he is not considered a gentleman by the social elite although he has every personal quality associated with gentility.

Through *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen presents this phenomenon in to surface by drawing economic setting that is mostly filled by professions dealing with agricultures. She want to depict the British economic condition before the booming of industrialization in nineteenth century. She attaches the characters in this novel with professions. For instance, Mr. Bennet represents the farmers who cultivate his field.

3. **Political Aspect**

Two political parties dominated English politics in the early 19th century –the Whigs and the Tories. The Whigs and Tories were loose groupings rather than tightly disciplined modern parties. Both parties’ names were originally seventeenth century terms of abuse associated with their supposed religious and rival loyalties (McNeese, 2013: 18).

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen does not draw any political condition that seems to affect the story since the setting, characters, or theme is merely about life society in that time. There are no political acts or regulations issued by the government during nineteenth century that influence the flow of the story. Neither domestic nor foreign political policies which
influence any events in the story can be found. She also does not portray any role of society in political process or the role of society in decision making and public policy.

4. **Science and Technology**

In science, the nineteenth century was a great period of specialization, as witness the formation of the separate scientific societies to supplement the older general academies such as the Royal Society (Bernal, 1953: 11). The technical developments of the nineteenth century brought about a complete transformation of the manner of life of hundreds of millions of people in countries dominated by industrial production and mechanized agriculture, and notably affected the conditions of all the remaining population of the world. Nevertheless, it is principally in quantity that the technical transformation of the nineteenth century was remarkable, in quality it was much less so (Bernal, 1953: 18).

In Pride and Prejudice the development of science and technology reflected in this novel. There is many tools as the results of the industrialization shown in the story, such as newspaper, bell and letter. Newspaper, as one of printed material or information really helps people to get some information.

This novel also uses interesting is letter. Letters are built into the novel in a quite fascinating way. It is used for a long distance communication. In Pride and Prejudice letters are mostly used to make information available and letters are used to inform about circumstances the Jane when she was sick in the Netherfield to her young sister, Elizabeth. (PAP, 1813: 28)
Industrialization also improved transportation system so it makes people to go some places easier. Jane Austen wants to give strong emphasis on traditional values in his novel. The most popular transportation in that time is carriage and coach. Most of the people have them to go some places. Traveling in that time was accomplished in horse drawn carriages and coach. This is proven by jane, when she asked Mrs. Bennet to permit her to use carriage to come at Caroline’s dinner invitation at Netherfield.

5. Cultural Aspect

In the nineteenth century many people especially the upper class enjoyed aristocrats excessive diet, and married woman from this class enjoyed increasing leisure. The amount of reading and writing grew voluminously. It was common to judge everything materially, money and wealth become the standard of pride and dignity (Back, 1967: 78).

Many activities occurred during leisure times. One of them was dancing party at the ball. It became activity for most of people in their spare time. In this novel, Mrs. Bennet represents this character because she always encourages their five daughters to attend the ball follow the dancing party. They come to the dancing party almost everyday when they are in spare time. It is due to has become their life style.

Another major sort of marriage which occurs in this novel is the one concerning marrying outside social class which happens in the novel. This is when someone from a rather high class marries a village girls which would be considered a social disaster. This is demonstrated by Mr. Darcy’s first marriage
proposal towards Elizabeth. He is taking on asking of someone of a much lower class.

In that time, everything is valued by material. The concept of materialism can be seen from the way Mrs. Bennet has a strong opinion on this subject due to her situation in life which is she should be concerned with herself and her daughters because if Mr. Bennet dies they will be left with nothing, because all their property will go to Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet wants her daughters married because if they do not then they will have no place to live, her great anxiety to get her daughters married is shown when she says “A single man of a large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!” (PAP, 1813: 2)

In the nineteenth century, most women of England did marry. After the marriage, the wives tended to stay at home to manage the households and took care the family. In this novel, Charlotte Lucas after becoming Williams Collins’s wife, she also tended to stay at home and managed the household. (PAP, 1813: 186)

In the traditional British class system, wealth is passed on via the inheritance of family property. Inherited wealth conferred for more status than money earned by work. Family estates were usually inherited by the oldest son and sometimes daughters were given smaller incomes. In this novel, Mr. Bennet can not inherit their wealth to their daughters but he inherits to his male cousin, Mr. William Collins.
6. Religious Aspect

In the nineteenth century there were two different groups in England that are largely Christian middle classes and largely un-Christian working classes. The factory worker did not go to the church because they were outside of any religious body. They thought religion just part of fading way of life and they were described by religion doubt (Gwinn, 1768: 79).

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen represents William Collins as the religious person. He is a clergyman and he has patroness, Lady Catherine. She always pays attention to his wishes, and consideration for his comfort, appeared very remarkable. William Collins had already had the honor of preaching her. (PAP, 1813: 57)

A clergyman in the Church of England is given a living, meaning a house, in a Church district or parish. He usually stays at personage, which is usually modest but comfortable. The minister is called a parson. In this novel, Jane Austen draws Mr. Collins as become a financial sponsor, or patron of the local church.

The majority religion in England is Christianity. Every Sunday they go to the Church for praying. As a good Christian, Lady Catherine de Bourgh also goes to the Church every Sunday.

So, based on the condition above the story of the novel can be mirror of the real condition society in the early nineteenth century that concerned with social status and social stratification in their society. Here, the writer tries to find whether there is a social stratification reflected in this novel or not.
By focusing on social aspects, Jane Austen tries to illustrate the social condition of the society at that time, and concludes that social class is not permanent. It can change depending on the effort of human. It can be called as a social mobility. By marriage, someone can change their social status be higher than before. This is experienced by Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet. At the story, they are told that they belong to middle class, but after they get married with rich men, Darcy and Bingley, their social status automatically follow their husband’s social status.

In the analysis and discussion above, it can be concluded that Jane Austen describes marriage based on social status or social stratification, clearly in the novel. It is not different from the reality in the early nineteenth century where in that period were many people had marriage based on material oriented and social status.

After analyzing the novel using sociological approach, finally the researcher finds that there is correlation between underlying theory, the historical background of the England in the early nineteenth century, and also the structural elements of the novel. It can also be said that Jane Austen is able to reflect the condition of England society in that period in the story of the novel.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After analyzing Pride and Prejudice novel by Jane Austen, the researcher describes the following conclusion. Firstly, based on the structural analysis of the novel it can be concluded that in Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen conveys a moral message that some people use marriage to lift up
their social economic status. In other to delivers the moral message, Jane Austen create the major character and devide them into two categories namely, the upper class and lower class. She then write plot of the novel like that to make it impossible for the major character to get married in their different social classes. Jane Austen wrote the stuctural elements of the novel in such a way that the structural elements are related to one another forming a unity.

Secondly, based on the sociological analysis, it can be concluded that in *Pride and Prejudice* Jane Austen reflects the social realities of the English society including social, economic, political, science and technology, cultural and religious aspect at late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The dominant aspect including in the novel is the social aspect, especially social stratification and social relation. In this novel Jane Austen also critisize the society that tend to consider social class as this only issue.

Related to the conclusion above, the writer suggests to the researcher to study the novel through other perspectives such as psychological, psychoanalitic, feminism, and marxism.
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VIRTUAL REFERENCES


