

Book Review of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Yudha Dwi Hadi Saputra and Christina Resnitriwati

English Department, Faculty of Humanity, Diponegoro University, Semarang 50275

Abstrak

Pride and Prejudice karya Jane Austen merupakan salah satu karya terbaik sastra pada zaman itu hingga sekarang. Buku ini mengisahkan tentang cinta antara Elizabeth dan Darcy yang terpaksa terhalang oleh status social pada zaman itu, yaitu zaman Victorian. Zaman Victorian itu tersebut terdiri dari tiga golongan masyarakat, yaitu kelas atas (*upper class*), kelas sedang (*middle class*), dan kelas bawah (*lower class*). Di Final Project ini akan mendiskusikan tentang tema : cinta (*Love*) dan kelas social (*social class*), sudut pandang dari Elizabeth (*point of view*) dan kelebihan serta kekurangan (*strengthen and weakness*) dari buku ini. Final project ini akan mencoba untuk menganalisisnya lebih dalam lagi.

1.1. Background of the Study

Pride and Prejudice is a story created by Jane Austen. This book may represent the author to explore her mind in writing. Love is one of the reasons why the writer chooses this book. The story in *Pride and Prejudice* is the reflection of what happened to people in the Victory age. A domination of the landlord power could be a weapon to get what they want and as a protector too when they had a trouble. Beside that the readers can learn a lot of things about love from this book, because *Pride and prejudice* is a book that serves the readers about the experience of love.

1.2. The Objectives of Study

To give a summary about "*Pride and Prejudice*", and to give a review about "*Pride and Prejudice*", especially to

give the example of human love and social class from different point of view especially from Elizabeth , the main character from this novel, who almost be a perfect person.

1.3. Jane Austen and Her Works

According to *Becoming Jane Austen : Alife and Biography of Jane Austen* , Jane Austen was born in Steventon, England, in 1775, where she lived for the first twenty-five years of her life. Her father, George Austen, was the rector of the local parish and taught her largely at home. She began to write while in her teens and completed the original manuscript of *Pride and Prejudice*, titled *First Impressions*, between 1796 and 1797. A publisher rejected the manuscript, and it was not until 1809 that Austen began the revisions that would bring it to its final form. *Pride and Prejudice* was

published in January 1813, two years after *Sense and Sensibility*, her first novel, and it achieved a popularity that has endured to this day. Austen published four more novels: *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, and *Persuasion*. The last two were published in 1818, a year after her death.

During Austen's life, however, only her immediate family knew of her authorship of these novels. At one point, she wrote behind a door that creaked when visitors approached; this warning allowed her to hide manuscripts before anyone could enter. Though publishing anonymously prevented her from acquiring an authorial reputation, it also enabled her to preserve her privacy at a time when English society associated a female's entrance into the public sphere with a reprehensible loss of femininity. In her work, Austen is often critical of the assumptions and prejudices of upper-class England. Nevertheless, Austen was in many ways a realist, and the England she depicts is one in which social mobility is limited and class-consciousness is strong.

2. SUMMARY

Rich young man who named Charles Bingley rented the manor of Netherfield Park caused a great problem in near the village of Longbourn, especially in the Bennets. The Bennets had five young daughters. The oldest one were Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and the youngest was Lydia. Mrs. Bennet would be happy if they all got married. Bingley met Jane and spent much of the evening dancing with her. His close friend, Mr. Darcy, was displeased with

the evening and haughtily refused to dance with Elizabeth, which made everyone did not like him such as arrogant and very unpleasant man.

However, Mr. Darcy found himself increasingly attracted to Elizabeth's charm and intelligence. Jane's friendship with Mr. Bingley also continued to make relationship, and Jane pays a visit to the Bingley mansion. On her journey to the house she was caught in a heavy rain and caught ill, forcing her to stay at Netherfield for several days. In order to take care Jane, Elizabeth hiked through muddy fields and arrived with a spattered mud dress, that is enough for the disdain of the snobbish Miss Bingley, Charles Bingley's sister.

When Elizabeth and Jane returned home, they found Mr. Collins visiting their family. Mr. Collins was a young clergyman who stood to inherit Mr. Bennet's property, which had been "brought," meaning that it could only be passed down to male heirs. Mr. Collins was full of self importance, though he was quite caught attention by the Bennet's girls. Shortly after his arrival, he proposed to Elizabeth. Meanwhile, the Bennet's girls became friendly with militia officers stationed in a nearby town. At the beginning of winter, the Bingleys and Darcy leaved Netherfield and returned to London, much to Jane's worry. A further shock arrived with the news that Mr. Collins had become engaged to Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth's best friend and the poor daughter of a local knight. Charlotte told to Elizabeth that she was getting older and needed the match for financial reasons. Charlotte and Mr. Collins got married and Elizabeth promised to visit them at

their new home. However, Miss Bingley visited her and behaved rudely, while Mr. Bingley failed to visit her at all. The marriage prospects for the Bennet's girls appeared bleak.

That spring, Elizabeth visited Charlotte, who now lived near the home of Mr. Collins's patron, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who was also Darcy's aunt. Darcy called on Lady Catherine and encounters Elizabeth, whose made presence to lead him to make a number of visits to the Collins's home, where she was staying. One day, he made a shocking proposal of marriage, which Elizabeth quickly refused. She told Darcy that she considered him arrogant and unpleasant, then angry with him for steering Bingley away from Jane and disinheriting Wickham. As for Wickham, he informed Elizabeth that the young officer was a liar and that the real cause of their disagreement was Wickham's attempted to elope with his young sister, Georgiana Darcy.

This letter caused Elizabeth to reevaluate her feelings about Darcy. The militia was leaving town, which made the younger, rather man-crazy Bennet's girls hopeless. Lydia managed to obtain permission from her father to spend the summer with an old colonel in Brighton, where Wickham's regiment would be stationed. With the arrival of June, Elizabeth went on another journey, this time with the Gardiners, who were relatives of the Bennets. She visited Pemberley, after making sure that Darcy was away, and delighted in the building and grounds, while was heard from Darcy's servants that he was a wonderful and generous master. Suddenly, Darcy arrived and behaved warm and friendly toward her.

Shortly thereafter, however, a letter arrived from home, telling Elizabeth that Lydia had eloped with Wickham and that the couple was nowhere to be found, which suggested that they might be living together out of wedlock. Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Bennet went off to search for Lydia, but Mr. Bennet eventually returned home empty-handed. Just when all hope seemed lost, a letter came from Mr. Gardiner saying that the couple had been found and that Wickham had agreed to marry Lydia in exchange for an annual income.

At the last, Wickham and Lydia married and came back to Longbourn briefly, where Mr. Bennet treated them coldly. Shortly thereafter, Bingley returned to Netherfield and resumed his courtship of Jane. Darcy went to stay with him and paid visits to the Bennets but made no mention of his desire to marry Elizabeth. Bingley, on the other hand, pressed his suit and proposed to Jane, to the great pleasure of everyone but Bingley's unfriendly sister. While the family celebrated the wedding, Lady Catherine de Bourgh visited to Longbourn. She blamed Elizabeth and said that she had heard that Darcy, her nephew, was planning to marry her. Since she considered the Bennet an unsuitable match for a Darcy, Lady Catherine demanded that Elizabeth promised to refuse him. Elizabeth spiritedly refused, saying she was not engaged to Darcy, but she would not promise anything against her own happiness. A little later, Elizabeth and Darcy went out walking together and Darcy told her that his feelings had not changed since the spring. She gently accepted his proposal, and both Jane –

Darcy and Elizabeth - Bingley were married.

3. Review of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

3.1 Love

Pride and Prejudice contains one of the most liked love stories in English literature: the courtship between Darcy and Elizabeth. As in any good love story, the lovers must avoid and defeat numerous stumbling blocks, beginning with the tensions caused by the lovers' own personal qualities. Elizabeth's pride makes her misjudge Darcy that based on a poor first impression, while Darcy's prejudice against Elizabeth's poor social standing blinds him, for a time, to her many goodness. Austen, meanwhile, proposes countless smaller obstacles to the realization of the love between Elizabeth and Darcy, including Lady Catherine's attempt to control her nephew, Miss Bingley's pride, Mrs. Bennet's ignorance, and Wickham's deception. In each case, unrest about social connections, or the desire for better social connections, disturb with the workings of love. Darcy and Elizabeth's realization of a mutual and soft love seems to imply that Austen views love as something independent of these social forces, as something that can be captured if only an individual is able to escape the effects of hierarchical society. Austen does sound some more realist notes about love, using the character of Charlotte Lucas, who marries the clown Mr. Collins for his money, to demonstrate that the heart does not always dictate marriage. Yet with her central characters, Austen suggests that true love is a force separate from society and one that can

conquer even the most difficult of conditions.

3.2 Class

The theme of class is related to reputation, in that both reflect the hardly ordered nature of life for the upper, middle and lower classes in Regency England.

3.2.1 The People in Upper Class

According to *About Britain*, the Upper class, that was important to know whom you could speak with - especially if you hadn't been properly introduced. For a woman, being asked to dance by a complete stranger could pose an etiquette problem which might have effect for days. Young ladies were constantly chaperoned. To be found alone with a gentleman who was other than family was tantamount to social death. Her reputation would be ruined and her gentleman companion would find himself the object of gossip, and most usually derision.

The established career for society women was marriage - full stop. They were expected to represent their husbands with grace and provide absolutely no scandal. Charity work would be accepted, but only if it was very unbelieve, sewing for the poor, or putting together food baskets. Gentlemen had to keep track of when it was proper to either smoke or have a glass of sherry in front of ladies. When to bow and to whom to tip your hat could cause gossip if the wrong decision was made. Members of Victorian society kept busy with parties, dances, visits, dressmakers, and tailors.

Keeping track of what other people in your social class were doing was also a full-time occupation.

The example of people who are coming from the upper class are : the people from Royal family and Land Lord meanwhile in the *Pride and Prejudice*: All Bingley's family, Fitzwilliam Darcy and Mr. Collins.

3.2.2 The People in the Middle

Using the proper title was of the utmost importance. "Ma'am" or "Sir" was always appropriate. If "Ma'am" was seen, it was necessary that you 'disappear', turning to face the wall and avoiding eye contact. Life was easier, though, amidst your fellow servants. Although private relationship was frowned upon, it wasn't against the rules for those 'below stairs' to enjoy singing, dancing, and other social activities together.

Quite often the 'upper class' of the servant world, the head of housekeeper and housekeeper, would put aside their arrogant roles in the household and join their fellow servants in joy. But come the morning, they would order supreme once again. Having a profession was another way of being a member of the middle class of Victorian society. Shopkeepers, doctors, nurses, a schoolmaster, or parish priest were all notable professions.

The examples of people who are coming from the upper class are: the people from in the *Pride and Prejudice*: All Bennett's family, and Mr. George Wickham.

3.2.3 The People in Lower Class

The Victorian society did not recognize that there was a lower class. 'The Poor' were invisible. Those members of England who worked as chimney sweeps, ratcatchers, or spent their days in factories had no place in the position of the upper class, although their services would be needed from time to time. The general attitude was that the poor deserved the way they lived. If good moral choices had been made, the poor wouldn't be living the way they did.

3.3 Point of view

Elizabeth point of view of social class in the "*Pride and Prejudice*":

1. Elizabeth does not see the people from their status or where they come, but she appreciates people more deeply by their own behaviors and characters.

For example: "... Elizabeth listened in silence. She was not sure. Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley were fine ladies and knew how to please but she thought they were too proud. Like their brother, they had a fortune but they chose to forget the money had come from trade..." (Austen 1978:16)

2. a. Elizabeth is full confidence and she does not care with her appearance when she visited her sister in the Netherfield where they have differences classes.

For example: ".....when arrived at Netherfield, her legs were tired, her stockings were dirty and her face glowed with the exercises..." (Austen 1978:16)

b. This is the point that Elizabeth comments about Mr.

Darcy, she is very brave when she says that she wants to forgive Darcy if he did not underestimate her, because Elizabeth had an honor to be a woman.

For example: "...I could easily forgive *his* pride, if he had not mortified *mine*...." (Austen 1978:25)

3.3 The Strengths of "*Pride and Prejudice*"

Pride and Prejudice offers advantages in correlating with social criticism during the Victorian era. The sense of the Victorian era can be summarized through this novel as this novel involves some turbulence within the society, especially between the upper classes and the lower classes. Interactions and conflicts among characters contained in the *Pride and Prejudice* novel strengthen the idea that social class is able to shape human's perception. This novel is able to reveal that most of society during the Victorian era increasing their living standard through the social classes, in this case is the upper class. Wealth is crucially important in *Pride and Prejudice*. The quotation below shows to the reader that a marriage is considered able to change people's living standard because a woman can move to the upper class if a person from the upper class marries her (engagement between Bingley and Jane or Elizabeth and Darcy).

The writer considered that "*Pride and prejudice*" is as one of the best books. This book is very interesting to read for its high quality. The main point that makes this book great is the story and the character. Jane Austen can bring the readers to the lower class world even

the readers are not a lower class community, but the readers can feel their world and atmosphere from this book. "*Pride and Prejudice*" is not the only book with love theme, but also a book that consists of Jane Austen's childhood and her fear social class communities, that is why this book can bring the readers included in the story deeply. From the story and plot, this book has a strong characteristic, setting and theme, simple, not confusing but quite interesting. With more than 150 pages, it is not easy to keep the reader interested to finish this book.

3.4 The Weaknesses of "*Pride and Prejudice*"

The weakness of *Pride and Prejudice* is contained in the character of Mrs. Bennet, a character that makes readers have become cynical over what she did as a mother. She should support what is best for their children not to "swap" his son as a pay-off family. In *pride and prejudice* Mrs. Bennet are too interfere in determining her child's soul mate, so that her children become feel annoy and angry sometimes.

4. Conclusion

The writer has opinion that “*Pride and Prejudice*” is one of the greatest novels ever. This novel causes an effect not only in literary world but also in real life, especially in love Elizabeth and Darcy as a symbol lower and upper class. Jane Austen as the author of this book successfully expresses his aspiration. This book gives the reader an answer from the question about impossible love. Bigger as a representation of lower class, plays his role greatly. The readers may feel like that Bigger is real, as if he is really alive in this world. This novel is not based on true story, but this novel is even more real.

In “*Pride and Prejudice*” the readers can see Jane Austen solidarity as a lower class. Austen gives some moral message in this book. Message about love, and anti-social class. Not only love for lower class, but also love for every people in this world. The writer concludes that through this book, the reader can understand more about social class, and love. Jane Austen shows the readers that experience is the best teacher. Austen is an example of how people care each other, and “*Pride and Prejudice*” is an example of how a book can change the world and change people perspective. “*Pride and Prejudice*” is not only a best seller book, but also a love messenger to a better life in this world, love for every human, no matter what the race, religion, and social class.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austen, Jane. 1972. *Pride and prejudice*. London : Oxford University Press.
- E Jacobs Hendry and Edgar V. Roberts. 2007. *Literature, An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. New Jersey : Prentee Hall.
- Gioia, Dana and X.J. Kennedy. *Literature, An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. Eight edition. New York : Longman Publisher.
- GradeSaver LLC. *Biography of Jane Austen*. 1999.
<<http://www.gradesaver.com/author/jane-austen/>> 27 March 2012.
- Holman, C. Hugh. 1960. *A Handbook to Literature*. New york : The Oddisey Press Inc
- Spence, Jon. 2007. *Becoming Jane Austen : Alife*. Hambledon & London : Penguin press.