

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, published in 1813, depicts the rigid social structures of the 19th century, focusing on the class differences between the upper, middle, and lower classes, amidst the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Austen explores the themes of class distinction, marriage, and female oppression through Elizabeth Bennet's struggle to deal with social norms that limit her freedom and life choices (Ispriyani 2008). Austen, through the interaction of characters from different classes, portrays the challenges of women in a patriarchal society and the systemic injustices of the Victorian era, making *Pride and Prejudice* a social critique of the class structure and moral norms that governed social life at that time (Putri, Bahri, and Suswati 2017).

The 19th century in England, reflected in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, was characterized by rigid social structures and a clear division of classes: upper class, middle class and lower class. This class system limits social mobility and perpetuates inequality. Through the characters of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, Austen depicts the dynamics of interactions that reflect societal pressures related to class status, as well as criticizing the oppression that arises from class differences, including in terms of social hierarchy, ethics, and prejudice. In addition, marriage as a means of social and political advancement in the period. The novel as a whole reflects the themes of class struggle and gender inequality prevalent in the Victorian era (Ispriyani 2008).

This research examines 19th-century women in England, specifically in relation to the injustices and limitations that existed at that time, through Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, which explores the rigid social structures on interactions between characters as well as the influence of social status and wealth on marriage and interpersonal relationships (Saeed and Mocabil 2024). The novel beautifully depicts the views of the upper class towards the middle and lower classes, which creates tension and fuels Elizabeth Bennet's struggle against the norms that limit her freedom. Through characters such as Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Austen explores how prejudice and stereotypes prevent individuals from achieving success and happiness, and highlights the oppression experienced by these classes. As such, the novel shows the impact of the class system on the lives of the people of the time (Fitriana 2014).

In Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, the rigid social structures of 19th century England serves as the main backdrop that shapes the lives and positions of the characters, especially the women (Rahman, Khairunnisa, and Amir 2023). The urgency of this question is reflected in the novel which illustrates how class differences affect personal relationships, economic opportunities and social expectations, ultimately limiting individual freedom. In this context, Elizabeth Bennet and other women live in a society that views marriage as the key to economic prosperity and social status. The pressure to conform to class norms often creates conflicts between personal desires and social realities, while Austen's critique highlights the impact of wealth and status that encourages prejudice and limits individual freedom (Krisita and Dewi 2020).

This research examines the rigid social structures of nineteenth-century England through Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, highlighting a gap in previous

research that has focused on the themes of love and marriage, without in-depth analysis of the interaction between social class and individual agency. This research aims to explore the nuances of social mobility, identity formation, and the psychological impact of social hierarchy, so as to enrich the understanding of the novel and its historical context.

In the 19th century, England experienced significant social change due to the Industrial Revolution, which is reflected in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The novel depicts the tensions between the three main classes: upper class, middle class, and lower class, and how social norms and societal expectations limit the choices of individuals, especially women, through the relationship dynamics between the characters, such as Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy (Putri et al. 2024). As such, *Pride and Prejudice* reflects the rigid social structures of 19th-century British society as well as the individual's struggle against these restrictions.

The researcher chose the title “Rigid Social Structures in 19th Century England Through Jane Austen's Novel *Pride and Prejudice*” because the novel deeply depicts the strict social hierarchy in 19th century England. The analysis focuses on social class, marriage, and land ownership, with the aim of understanding how the rigid class system limits individual choices, affects relationships, and shapes social norms, especially for women who are often forced to marry for status and financial security. Through characters such as Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, the novel not only reflects the impact of social structures on individuals, but also provides a critique of social injustice. As such, the novel is a relevant object of study to understand the social structure and struggles of individuals in English society of the period.

This research uses Karl Marx's theory to analyze strict social stratification in 19th century England. Marxist theory emphasizes that character motivation is influenced by material conditions, not personal ideals, as seen in the development of Elizabeth's perception of Mr. Darcy, which demonstrates the impact of economic status on romantic decisions. Mrs. Bennet's character reflects the social pressure from the upper class to achieve a profitable marriage, while the analysis of gender roles reveals how women were often viewed as commodities in the marriage market. Although Marxist theory is not explicitly expressed by Austen, capitalist dynamics and class struggle are visible in the social interactions depicted. Thus, through a Marxist perspective, *Pride and Prejudice* can be understood as a critique of the economic and social structures that influence personal relationships, as well as highlighting the complexities of class and gender within a broader historical and ideological context.

This research uses qualitative research methods, which is an approach that explores social phenomena from the subjective perspective of participants. This method includes various approaches, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative (Busetto, Wick, and Gumbinger 2020). Qualitative research does not rely on statistical tools, but rather on the observation and interpretation of data that is descriptive and narrative, so as to provide a richer picture of the subject under study. Thus, the selection of methods in qualitative research must be adjusted to the research objectives to be achieved.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Statement of the problem based on the background above are as follows:

1. What are the types of rigid social structures of the 19th Century England in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*?

2. How are the rigid social structures of the 19th Century England revealed in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the above problem identification, there are two objectives to be achieved in the study. They are as follows:

1. To find out what the types of rigid social structures of the 19th Century England are in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*.
2. To analyze how the rigid social structures of the 19th Century England revealed is in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This research analyzes the strict social hierarchy in 19th century England, as reflected in Austen's novels. The main focus of this research is the clear class division between the upper, middle and working classes, and its impact on gender roles and societal expectations, especially regarding marriage, wealth and social mobility. By exploring these themes, this research aims to show how social conventions affect individual choices and relationships, as well as the limitations characters face based on class, gender and economic status. The analysis will highlight marriage as a social transaction, wealth and land ownership, prejudice and discrimination, and social hierarchy and etiquette. The research is limited to a textual analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*, with reference to historical and literary context to support the discussion.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be understood from two main perspectives. Theoretically, this research aims to explore the socio-historical context that shaped Austen's work and the literary techniques used to represent the rigid class system in

the 19th century. Through the analysis of characters, social interactions, and norms in the novel, this research reveals the complexity of social stratification and boundaries imposed by society, as well as the power dynamics of the time. By applying sociological theory, this research is expected to enrich the understanding of Austen's novel, offer a new perspective on her social commentary, and provide insight into the influence of social dynamics on individual identity and choices.

Practically, this research provides important insights into the impact of social structure on individual lives, using the social hierarchy in *Pride and Prejudice* as an analytical framework for understanding societies throughout history and across cultures. The challenges the characters face in this rigid system reflect contemporary issues such as social mobility and class inequality. By analyzing the struggles depicted by Austen, this research not only offers a way to understand and address current social injustices, but is also relevant in the context of literary education. Understanding the social and cultural background of Austen's work helps readers and students appreciate themes such as love, class, and morality, and can serve as a reference for teachers in designing a curriculum that combines literary analysis with social studies, encourages critical discussion, and provides valuable lessons about social injustice and gender equality that are still relevant today.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sociology of Literature

Sociology of Literature examines the interaction between literature and the social context in which literature is produced and consumed. In this case, Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* serves as a critical lens to analyze the rigid social structure of 19th century England. The era was characterized by strict class hierarchies and economic constraints that affected social interactions and personal relationships. According to Eagleton (2000), literature not only reflects the norms of society, but also criticizes and challenges them. The portrayal of characters such as Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in the novel reflects the tension between individual desires and societal expectations, as well as how social class and gender affect personal agency and marital prospects.

In addition, the sociology of literature also investigates how authors' backgrounds and social positions shape their narratives. Austen, as a noblewoman, successfully navigates the complexities of her social environment, which is evident in her nuanced characterizations and plot developments. This reflects Bourdieu's (1984) concept of social capital, where individuals navigate their relationships based on their social status. The novel serves as a reflection and critique of social norms, as Austen subtly advocates the importance of individual merit over rigid class distinctions. By analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of sociology, we can appreciate how Austen not only captures the essence of her time, but also challenges its limitations, offering insights that remain relevant in contemporary discussions of social structure.

Sociology of literature provides an important perspective in analyzing Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, as this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how the work reflects and critiques the social structure of 19th century England. By considering the social, economic and political context in which the novel was produced, literary sociology goes beyond textual interpretation and allows for the study of social class, social mobility, gender roles and cultural norms of the time. Austen depicts the social hierarchy and class dynamics that dominated society, where the characters in the novel serve as representations of the rigid social structures. This approach also shows that literature not only reflects social reality, but also shapes society's views and values. Therefore, the sociological analysis of literature in this research is highly relevant to reveal how the novel represents and questions social norms, making it more than just a romance story, but also a critical reflection on early 19th century British society, in accordance with Goldman's (1977) view that literary works are products of social structures that shape the collective consciousness of society.

2.2 Rigid Social Structures

According to Karl Marx (1848), rigid social structures relates to social stratification that is rigid and difficult to change due to the dominance of the ruling class over the working class. Karl Marx's theory of rigid social structures focuses on class conflicts that arise due to differences in access to resources and power. In a capitalist society, Marx sees a bourgeois class that controls the means of production and a proletariat class that works as labourers. This difference creates inequality and ongoing conflict. In the context of this research, Marx's theory can be related to the social structure of 19th-century England, which was differentiated by class, wealth and status. The novel *Pride and Prejudice* illustrates how social class affects characters'

lives and choices, such as marriage, education, and social interactions. Through analysing the novel, this thesis can show how the rigid social structures of the time created conflict and inequality, as described by Marx.

In the context of 19th century England, as depicted in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, a rigid social structures is visible through a clear class division between the aristocracy, gentry, and middle class, where social mobility is very limited and marriage becomes one of the main ways to maintain or improve social status. Marx argues that the upper classes maintain their power through control over the economy and culture, which is reflected in the novel through the social pressure on women like Elizabeth Bennet to marry for economic stability, not love (Eagleton 1976). As such, *Pride and Prejudice* can be read as a representation of 19th century British social reality that reflects Marx's theory of rigid social structure and how it shapes the lives of individuals in society, as well as depicting injustice and class struggle relevant to Marx's thought.

2.2.1 Marriage as a Social Transaction

Karl Marx's theory of marriage as a social transaction highlights the relationship between economics, social class and the institution of marriage. According to Marx, marriage is not only an emotional bond, but also a reflection of existing social and economic structures, serving to strengthen the economic and social position of individuals or families in a capitalist society. Within the framework of historical materialism, Marx saw marriage as a social transaction closely linked to social class. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* depicts characters trapped within strict social norms, where marriage becomes a means to achieve social status and financial security. Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* state that bourgeois families

serve to pass on wealth and status, reinforcing social stratification (Marx and Engels 1848). In the context of 19th century Britain, marriage became a way for middle and upper-class families to consolidate wealth and power, with women often seen as assets whose value was measured by their ability to bring wealth or social connections into the marriage.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Marx's views are seen through characters such as Charlotte Lucas and Elizabeth Bennet. Charlotte marries Mr. Collins for financial security, albeit without love, while Elizabeth, albeit out of love, chooses the wealthy and high social status Mr. Darcy, showing that marriage can be a means of social mobility within a rigid class structure. Austen depicts Elizabeth and Darcy's struggle against the social norm of marriage, where Elizabeth refuses to marry for financial gain, reflecting a critique of the restrictive social system. In contrast, Charlotte's choice reflects the individual's entrapment in existing social and economic conditions. In Marx's view, this decision demonstrates how marriage functions to maintain or enhance social position, with middle-class women often forced to choose a loveless marriage for financial security. This reflects that marital relationships are often determined by economic factors rather than affection, in line with Marx's thinking in "Das Kapital" which emphasizes that economic conditions shape social relations, including the institution of marriage within the wider social structure (Marx 1867). The rigid social structures in nineteenth-century England demonstrated the subordinate position of women who depended on marriage as a means of social mobility in a patriarchal system controlled by property ownership.

A Marxian analysis of marriage in Jane Austen's novels, particularly *Pride and Prejudice*, reveals how marriage functions as a social transaction that reflects and

critiques the rigid social structure of 19th century England. In this context, marriage is not only a private affair, but also influenced by the economic and political forces that shape individual lives. Austen illustrates how economic interests and social class influence marriage choices, as well as how marriage can reinforce or challenge the social order. Through its characters, the novel reflects a broader social reality, where marriage becomes a means to maintain status and power. For example, Lady Catherine de Bourgh attempts to maintain her aristocratic heritage by marrying off her daughter to Mr. Darcy, demonstrating the upper class's attempt to maintain dominance. Thus, through a Marxist lens, Austen shows that marriage is an integral part of a larger economic and social system, reflecting the rigid class structure of English society at the time (Austen 1813).

2.2.2 Social Hierarchy and Etiquette

Karl Marx's theory of historical materialism provides a framework for understanding social hierarchy and etiquette in 19th century England, as seen in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Marx argued that social structure is determined by production relations, dividing society into two main classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx 1867). In the context of the novel, the rigid social hierarchy reflects a class structure based on land and capital ownership, where noble families such as Mr. Darcy occupy the highest position, while the Bennet family is in a lower position due to dependence on inheritance and marriage prospects of daughters. Ethics and social norms, including marriage rules, serve to maintain this hierarchy. Marx also emphasized that dominant ideologies, including views on ethics, are products of the ruling class that mask economic inequality (Marx and Engels 1846). Characters like Elizabeth Bennet, who comes from the middle class without substantial wealth, faces

social restrictions that hinder her mobility, reflecting how etiquette is used to maintain status in a rigid social structure.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, etiquette and social norms serve to maintain status, where upper-class characters such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh use etiquette to assert dominance and social hierarchy. In contrast, middle-class characters such as Elizabeth Bennet struggle against societal restrictions. According to Marx, class conflict arises when individuals from the lower-class challenge existing structures, and Elizabeth's struggle to gain recognition from Mr. Darcy reflects the tension between social class and individual expectations. Etiquette, in Marx's view, becomes a means of legitimizing upper-class domination by instilling the value of obedience to aristocracy (Eagleton 1976). Lady Catherine represents the ruling class that enforces social rules, while Marx refers to this phenomenon as “false consciousness,” where the middle and lower classes accept the social structure as natural. However, Elizabeth resists this oppression, reflecting the conflict between the individual and the oppressive class structure.

In this thesis, Marx's theory is used to analyze the influence of the rigid social structures in 19th century England on the lives and choices of the characters in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The analysis explores how different ethical norms and social expectations for each class limit or empower the characters, as well as the manifestation of class conflict in the relationships between characters. Through a Marxist lens, the novel can be interpreted as a critique of the social and economic inequalities of its time, with the concept of social rigidity analyzed within Marx's “base and superstructure” framework. Although Elizabeth Bennet marries Mr. Darcy and gains a higher status, this reflects individual luck without changing the social system,

which still maintains class stratification. Thus, *Pride and Prejudice* shows that social hierarchy in 19th century England was not only based on economics, but also maintained by cultural norms and etiquette reinforced by the ruling class.

2.2.3 Land Ownership and Wealth

In Karl Marx's theoretical framework, land ownership and wealth is the basis for the formation of the class structure in society. Marx argued that the bourgeois class, which controls the means of production including land, can accumulate wealth and maintain social dominance. In the context of 19th century England, land ownership serves as a symbol of inherited status and power, as reflected in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The character Mr. Darcy, the owner of a large estate in Pemberley, enjoys a high social position, while the Bennet family, with limited holdings, faces economic hardship. Marx's theory highlights the relationship between social class and economic structure, where land ownership not only reflects status, but also grants political power. Wealthy characters such as Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley wield great influence, whereas Elizabeth Bennet struggles for recognition within the rigid social structure (Marx 1867). In a capitalist society, the social structure is determined by the ownership of the means of production, creating separate social classes, where the bourgeoisie and aristocrats control resources, while the lower classes are marginalized. Characters like Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh represent the landowning elite who maintain dominance through social norms and strategic marriages.

The concept of land ownership and wealth in Marx's theory is relevant to analyze the rigid social structures in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Land ownership and wealth occurs when individuals are alienated from their work, themselves, and others due to the exploitative class system. In the novel, Elizabeth

Bennet experiences alienation because she has to consider marriage to improve her family's social and economic status, where her choices are limited by upper-class norms. This social structure creates inequalities and injustices that hinder social mobility and individual freedom. The interactions between the characters also reflect Marx's concept of social class, where marriage and social relationships are influenced by economic status (Marx 1844). For example, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy's marriage is not only a love story, but also reflects a shift in social structure that challenges traditional norms. The novel depicts life in 19th century England and its complex class dynamics, where land ownership and wealth determine identity and social relationships. As such, *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen as a critique of the rigid social structure and class exploitation outlined by Marx.

2.2.4 Prejudice and Discrimination

In Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Karl Marx's theory of social class can be used to analyze the emergence of prejudice and discrimination as a product of the rigid social structures in 19th century England. Marx divided capitalist society into two main classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In this novel, the Bennet family represents the middle class that seeks to rise socially through marriage, while characters like Darcy reflect the wealthy aristocracy. Interactions between these classes often lead to prejudice, with the upper class looking down on the lower class due to differences in wealth and status. Marx's theory highlights the conflict that arises from the economic structure, where the ruling class exploits the working class, creating tension and discrimination. As such, *Pride and Prejudice* reflects class dynamics where social status and wealth determine individual worth, as well as how social and economic norms reinforce discrimination and limit social mobility.

Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* depicts characters trapped in a strict class system, where marriage and social relationships are influenced by economic status and family background. Marxist analysis, especially the concepts of ideology and alienation, are highly relevant in understanding this dynamic. Ideology, as a belief system used by the ruling class to maintain the status quo, is reflected in Mr. Darcy and Bingley's views towards the Bennet family.

Meanwhile, alienation, which describes the feeling of being alienated in a capitalist society, is seen in the character of Elizabeth Bennet who feels alienated from the social norms expected of her. Through a Marxist lens, prejudice and discrimination in the novel can be understood as a reflection of structural inequality in 19th century England. Marriage, in this context, serves as a means to maintain wealth within a limited social circle, as demonstrated by Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mr. Darcy. Thus, *Pride and Prejudice* not only depicts the dynamics of love, but also criticizes the social structure that creates discrimination and prejudice due to rigid social stratification (Marx 1867).

2.3 Review of Previous Studies

The study of the rigid social structures in 19th century England often refers to literary works that reflect the social reality of the time. One of the most frequently discussed novels in this context is Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Previous research has shown that Austen meticulously depicts the social hierarchy and norms that govern interactions between classes in British society.

2.3.1 Putri et al. (2017)

This study deals with social class in British society in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The objectives of this study were to find out the impacts of social class toward British society based on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen and to describe social class reflected toward British society in that novel. The study was conducted by using descriptive qualitative method. The data of this research were dialogues and narration in *Pride and Prejudice* novel. The analysis of this study was based on Marxist's concept (1995:25). The findings of this study were (1) two impacts of social class toward British society found in *Pride and Prejudice* novel, they were pride and prejudice (2) three types of social classes which were reflected, such as power, wealth, and status (Putri et al. 2017).

This research has similarities with previous research that discusses social class in England in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The previous researcher noted that characters such as Mr. Darcy and Mr. Collins represent different aspects of the upper and middle classes, and showed how their interactions with Elizabeth and her family can affect personal relationships. In addition, the study emphasized that Jane Austen not only depicts social structures, but also criticizes and questions existing norms through her narrative and characters. In the research of Putri et al. (2017), there are two points of analysis raised, namely the impact of social class found in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* and how social class is reflected through power, wealth and status. The previous researchers used theories and concepts from Marx to analyze the data, and applied qualitative methods, including methods developed by Fraenkel and Wallen, to collect research data.

This research differs from previous studies as it takes a more holistic approach in analyzing the impact of rigid social structures on individual freedom in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. In addition to considering factors such as class, gender, and marriage, this study also explores how rigid social norms affect the expression of emotions, career choices, and personal aspirations of the characters in the work. To analyze the data, this research adopts theories and concepts from Marx and applies the qualitative method developed by Busetto. Taking into account previous studies, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the rigid social structure in 19th-century England limited individual freedom in Jane Austen's literary works.

2.3.2 Sarah (2022)

The problem of social class becomes a unique object which would be discovered in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The study aimed to determine the influence of social class on British society and represent the reflection of social class in British society in the novel. A method used in this research was qualitative descriptive. Data that were collected were in the form of narration and dialogue in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Furthermore, this study used the Marxist concept (1995:25) to analyse the data. The findings of this research were the discovery of the impact of social class on British society in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, namely *Pride and Prejudice* as the title in the novel and the invention of the forms of social class which can be found in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, such as status, wealth, and power (Sarah 2022).

This research has similarities with research conducted by Sarah (2022) who discussed the theme of wealth and power in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. In her

research, Sarah used the theories and concepts of Karl Marx (1995) to analyse the data, and applied qualitative methods developed by Moleong (2005). There are four points of analysis discussed by Sarah, namely pride, prejudice, wealth, and status. Through this approach, Sarah managed to reveal how social and economic structures affect the interactions between characters in the novel, as well as how these values shaped the views of society at that time.

This research has a significant difference compared to the research conducted by Sarah, because it uses a more holistic approach in analysing the impact of rigid social structures on individual freedom in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*. In this study, the researcher applies Marx's theories and concepts to analyse the data, as well as using qualitative methods developed by Busetto. Taking into account previous research, this study not only provides deep insights into power dynamics, but also highlights the relevance of these themes in the current social context. Therefore, this study provides a strong foundation for understanding the complexity of the relationship between individuals and society in literary works, and opens up space for further research on similar themes in other works.