

AN ANALYSIS OF MARXIST FEMINISM IN AUSTEN'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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Abstract : This study aims to analyze the concept of Marxist Feminism in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the writer used descriptive qualitative method to analyze and collect data about the Marxist Feminism in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. This study uses a Marxist Feminism theory. This Marxist feminist framework reveals how Austen critiques social class and gender influence in economic structures, showing how personal relationships in the novel are interwoven with economic transactions and societal expectations. This research highlights the systemic nature of women's economic dependence and the limitations imposed by capitalist norms. By analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* through this lens, this research not only deepens the understanding of Austen's work, but also contributes to feminist literary criticism and the ongoing discourse on the socio-economic dimensions of literature.

Keywords: *Social Class, Gender Roles, Marxism, Feminist Literary Criticism.*

INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" (1813) is a seminal work in English literature, offering a nuanced portrayal of 19th-century British society. Traditionally, the novel has been analyzed through various lenses, including its romantic and class elements. However, a Marxist feminist perspective provides a fresh and critical approach to understanding the text, particularly in relation to gender and class dynamics. In 19th-century England, social mobility was largely limited by class and gender. Human beings are categorized into different classes, primarily the lower class and the upper class, with members of each class experiencing various socio-economic and political challenges that have significant impacts on their lives (Bashir & Guzzo, 2019). The reasons behind all the struggles that endured by women in *Pride and Prejudice* are mostly because economic condition and society perspectives that forces women to through all that struggle. So, the struggles are expected to secure woman and her family economic condition, to raise their social status in society (Rorintulus et al, 2022). Austen's portrayal of women's roles and opportunities within this context offers insights into how women navigated their restricted social positions. For instance, Elizabeth Bennet's eventual marriage to Mr. Darcy, who represents the upper class, can be seen as a form of economic negotiation rather than a purely romantic choice. Elizabeth's criticism and mockery of men in the novel express her views on a patriarchal society, explicated by Marxist Feminism Theory (Chang, 2014). The significance of Marxist feminist analysis lies in its ability to uncover the representation of social class and gender influence in economic structure in literary works. By applying this framework to "Pride and Prejudice," this study seeks to reveal how Austen's portrayal of class and gender reflects broader socio-economic conditions and critiques the capitalist and patriarchal systems of her time. This approach not only enriches the understanding of Austen's work but also contributes to the ongoing discourse in feminist literary criticism, demonstrating the relevance of Marxist feminist theory in analyzing classical literature.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

In conducting research, a method is needed to conduct research accurately and systematically. This research is classified as qualitative research. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is a research approach that focuses on a deep understanding of social phenomena in their natural context. The main goal is to understand the phenomenon thoroughly and deeply. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the writer

to explore the context, values, and messages contained in the novel through in-depth analysis.

Data Collection

Including the research, the author collected data from two types of sources. primary sources and secondary sources. The novel as the primary data and secondary data which included books and academic articles that discuss themes of feminism and Marxism in literature, particularly Jane Austen's works.

Data Analysis

This research involved analyzing characters and themes through a Marxist feminist perspective to identify how social and economic class structures influence the gender roles of the characters and plots, as well as how social class determines the opportunities and limitations faced by female characters. Marxist feminism is a form of Feminism that investigates and explains the ways in which women are oppressed through economic systems of society and private property (Hussain, 2023). The steps used by Hussain in Marxist feminism research include in-depth reading and text analysis based on the novel and then discussing the contexts to find the Marxist feminism values contained.

FIDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Social Class in Pride and Prejudice

According to *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen, there is explained the existence of a social class division between the middle and upper classes. There are several indicators that cause differences in social class in *Pride and Prejudice*, including differences in income, types of work, educational level, residence, means of transportation, and fashion (Dewi & Thoyibi, 2021). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen examines the social class structure of 19th century England. Social class becomes a major determining factor in the relationships between characters. Elizabeth Bennet, as the protagonist, comes from an economically unstable middle class, while Mr. Darcy is a representative of the wealthy upper class and has social power. Research by Heavenly & Kasih (2020) states that Austen shares her view toward the upper class or the landowner by expressing someone with a large fortune. The wealth and the income of someone become the measurement of the social class.

a. Social Class and Economic Position of Characters

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen shows social class differences through her main characters. The Bennet family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters, has relatively limited and unstable wealth. This leads to pressure to marry to improve their social and economic status. For example, Elizabeth Bennet faces a great challenge in finding a husband who is not only

emotionally compatible but can also provide the necessary economic stability. Research by Lindström (2010) states that social class conflicts are numerous in *Pride and Prejudice*, but the most prominent is the conflict between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Their class difference is the main reason why Darcy cannot initially see himself forming a serious attachment to Elizabeth. Nevertheless, he eventually falls in love with her but even then their different classes pose a huge obstacle for him.

b. Class Distinctions and Social Mobility

Marxism and social mobility are two topics that Jane Austen frequently explores in her books, looking at how social class and wealth both limit and open up opportunities for her characters. While criticizing the rigid social structure of early 19th-century England, Austen also makes the case for social mobility through marriage and personal development (Khan et al, 2023). Class distinction is a major focus of *Pride and Prejudice*, reflecting the rigid social hierarchy of early 19th century England. Marxist feminism explores how class structure affects social mobility and individual opportunities.

Gender Influence in Economic Structure

Marxist Feminism theory argues that patriarchy and capitalism are intertwined in oppressing women. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen shows how gender roles are determined by economic structures. Women in the novel are often portrayed as dependent on marriage for financial security. According to Badinjki (2019), the novel examines Austen's views by presenting various models of marriage as economic arrangements where women have little agency in their choices. It highlights the women's need for wealthy men and critiques the societal view of marriage, questioning the traditional gender roles that treated women as objects and beautiful statues without rights. Women's primary role was seen as being at home, with their duty being to serve and please their husbands. For most unmarried women, the ultimate goal was to marry and gain societal approval, often facing numerous challenges along the way. Austen contrasts negative marriage models with a new ideal based on understanding, love, and respect.

a. Gender Roles and Economic Dependency

Strict gender roles and expectations were prescribed by societal conventions at the time. Women were mainly viewed as domestic carers who relied on marriage for social status and financial security. Men were the primary decision-makers and providers, and their ability to find a suitable spouse was frequently correlated with their social status and financial situation (Bagthaliya, 2023). According to Marxist Feminism theory, capitalism and patriarchy work together to oppress women by limiting their access to wealth and power. In *Pride and Prejudice*, women's gender roles are heavily influenced by their economic dependence.

b. Marriage as Economic Transaction

One of the main themes in *Pride and Prejudice* is the depiction of marriage as an economic transaction rather than a romantic endeavor. Marxist feminism highlights how capitalism affects societal norms and institutions, including marriage. In Austen's novels, marriage is often portrayed as a means to secure financial stability and social status. Charlotte's approach reflects the harsh realities of a system where marriage is a means to secure social and economic stability. Her decision to marry Mr. Collins, despite his lack of personal charm, underscores the economic motivations driving the decision. As feminist scholar Mary Poovey notes, Charlotte's choice illustrates the extent to which women's social and financial security depends on economic transactions in a capitalist society (Poovey, 1984).

CONCLUSION

After analyzing *Pride and Prejudice* through the lens of Marxist feminism, the writer conclude that the concept of Marxist feminism is depicted in this novel through Austen's critique of social class and gender influence in economic structure. Social class becomes a major factor in the relationships between the characters, where Elizabeth Bennet who comes from an economically unstable middle class faces a great challenge in finding a life partner who is not only emotionally compatible but also able to provide economic security. Mr. Darcy, on the other hand, represents the rich and powerful upper class. This class difference becomes a major obstacle in their relationship, illustrating the limits imposed by the capitalist system on social mobility and personal relationships. Austen criticizes how gender roles are affected by the economic structure. In the novel, marriage is often viewed as an economic transaction rather than a romantic bond. Elizabeth Bennet rejects marriages based on economic gain, such as the rejection of Mr. Collins, and asserts the importance of personal integrity and genuine love. Marriage becomes a means to achieve social and economic security, and this reflects a critique of the patriarchal system that places women in a position of economic dependence.

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