CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a general description of the research. It consists of Research Background, Statement of Problem, Research Purposes, Research Significances, and definition of key terms.

1.1.   Research Background

The famed English author Jane Austen, is known for her literary works that use a modern and distinctive language style to shed a spotlight on the everyday lives of ordinary people. The literary contributions of the author in question not only established the genre of the book within her contemporary period, but also endured the test of time, ultimately achieving the status of timeless masterpieces, even long after her demise, spanning over two centuries. Jane Austen authored a total of six complete books, specifically titled *Sense & Sensibility, Pride & Prejudice, Mansfield Park, Emma, Northanger Abbey,* and *Persuasion*. Furthermore, her literary works have been extensively transformed into numerous film adaptations, television programs, and theatrical productions (Halsey, 2019). Jane Austen is renowned for her adeptness in crafting robust and humorous characters, in addition to her significant role as a social commentator and pioneer of early feminism.

In the pursuit of identifying the subject matter to be examined in this thesis, three literary works authored by Jane Austen have emerged as potential choices. One of Jane Austen's most famous novels is *Pride and Prejudice*, serving as the inaugural work in her literary canon. According to (Talbot, 2023), *Pride and Prejudice* novel has achieved a sales figure above 20 million copies, accompanied by an impressive number of nearly two million five-star reviews. The story is situated in the rural regions of England during the first decades of the 19th century. It delves into several issues such as love, marriage, social standing, and class distinctions. This work has garnered significant attention and scholarly inquiry due to its widespread popularity and thought-provoking thematic content. Hence, the

researcher decided not to use this particular novel as the subject of investigation for the thesis study. Conversely, the researcher attempts to substitute the subject of investigation with alternative literary works authored by Jane Austen.

One more novel that is being considered as a potential subject of investigation is *Emma*. *Emma*, a novel by Jane Austen, is recognized as one of her most prominent works, characterized by its exploration of a consistent theme and genre. Nevertheless, this literary work does not enjoy the same level of popularity as *Pride and Prejudice*. Due to its widespread acclaim, this literary work has garnered significant attention from scholars and experts in the field of literature across the globe. Researchers may not consider this novel as a primary object of study due to its relatively lower popularity compared to renowned works like *Pride and Prejudice*. However, it is worth noting that there exists a considerable body of scholarly literature, including journals and other scientific works, that engage with and analyze this novel. To address this issue, the researcher sought out further literary works authored by Jane Austen that explored similar themes and genres. Ultimately, the researcher selected *Persuasion* as the focal point of this thesis investigation. Despite the extensive research conducted by literary critics on the subject of *Persuasion*, there remains a notable dearth of exploration from various angles.

Persuasion is a literary work classified as a romantic novel, authored by Jane Austen and posthumously released in 1817. *Persuasion* is a romance tale that continues to gain popularity even after two centuries (Keymer, 2022). The novel has undergone three adaptations, resulting in the creation of a movie and television series on each occasion. In April 2021, Netflix announced *Persuasion* is now undergoing adaptation into a drama series for the streaming platform Netflix, with plans for its premiere scheduled for the year 2022. The work continues to have widespread readership due to its numerous adaptations, as it provides readers with the opportunity to engage in imaginative exploration of the universe and create diverse interpretations of characters and settings. Moreover, engaging in the process of reading the novel aids readers in gaining a deeper comprehension of the

characters, narrative, and the distinct linguistic style employed by Jane Austen, so enhancing their overall reading experience.

The narrative of this literary work revolves around the protagonist, Anne Elliot, who was previously engaged in a romantic engagement with a youthful military officer named Frederick Wentworth. However, their union was ultimately thwarted due to societal disparities in their respective social standings. After a period of seven years following their initial separation, Anne is reunited with Frederick, who has since ascended to the rank of navy captain and has acquired a substantial amount of riches. The reunion occurred as a result of Anne's relocation prompted by financial challenges, with the intention of alleviating debt and accumulating savings. The tale portrays Anne's arduous endeavor to safeguard her affection and attain personal contentment. In addition to examining the romantic narrative of Anne Elliot, the novel also portrays the socio-cultural milieu of early 19th century England, effectively capturing the prevailing social stratification within British society during that era.

Persuasion encompasses various prominent issues, such as the dynamics of status and socioeconomic class, the institution of marriage, and the pervasive issue of gender inequity. The work explores the issue of status and social class, delving into the intricacies of 18th century English society and its dynamics of class and social mobility. Status and independence are determined by a confluence of factors including wealth, lineage, and occupation. Some individuals attain financial independence by entering into marriages with affluent partners, and others attain social status and wealth by advancing within the hierarchy of the Navy. Furthermore, the exploration of the issue of marriage holds equal significance in the novel, as it is widely regarded as the author's most sophisticated and contemplative portrayal of a marital narrative.

The novel's exploration of gender inequality sheds light on the constrained range of options accessible to women during Austen's time period. During that era, marriage emerged as the most feasible avenue for women to attain a satisfactory quality of life. The primary sphere of women's control resided predominantly inside

their interactions with males, wherein they employed various strategies to allure, decline, or consent to marriage offers. In order to comprehensively address the various issues encompassed within Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, the researcher has opted to focus this analysis on the topic of social stratification. Social stratification encompasses various elements, including social class, position and autonomy, and the impact of women.

The selection of the novel *Persuasion* as the main focus of this thesis is motivated by its examination of the protagonist's personal challenges and romantic narrative, and its portrayal of social stratification within British society. Austen depicts the disparities in socioeconomic class prevalent within English society, with a particular focus on the distinctions between the high and poorer strata. The disparities between the two classes are assessed by several indicators, including power, privilege, and prestige, which exert an influence on the social standing, way of life, customs, and conduct that distinguish these classes. This disparity results in a significant divergence between the two socioeconomic groups. The outcome manifests as a disparity in social standing among women. The existence of this difference exerts influence on the cognitive processes of women, leading them to be inclined towards selecting marriage as a viable means to attain or enhance their social standing and socioeconomic position. The analysis of this phenomenon might be approached from the perspective of Socialist feminism. Scholars possess a keen interest in examining the manner in which the novel portrays the societal circumstances that impacted the lives of women during the first decades of the 19th century. Additionally, they aim to discern the representations of social hierarchy that are present within the novel.

The examination of social stratification in Jane Austen's work *Persuasion* is of paramount importance as it illuminates the prevailing disparities in social classes within English society during that era. In this literary work, Jane Austen explores the social stratification between the upper and lower classes, as evidenced by their respective lifestyles, behaviors, and customs. The aforementioned discrepancy has a significant effect on the social status and reputation of women, thereby shaping

their cognitive processes. The aforementioned discrepancy impacts their cognitive processes and compels them to contemplate matrimony as a strategy for acquiring or enhancing their social standing. A scholarly analysis of the social stratification portrayed in the novel *Persuasion* could enhance readers' understanding of its depiction of the daily life of society during that time period. This analysis can also aid readers in understanding the impact of the depiction of social class distinctions on the positions and status of women in British society during that period.

In the hierarchical structure of British society at the turn of 19th century, the upper class was primarily occupied by two distinct groups: the aristocracy and the landed gentry. Within the aristocracy were noble families distinguished by hereditary titles such as dukes, earls, viscounts, and barons. These titled individuals not only possessed prestigious lineage but also wielded considerable sway in economic and political realms. Complementing the aristocracy was the nobility, prosperous landowners who controlled large areas of agricultural land. Serving as the arbiters of culture, they held control over both central and local government positions. Many of them owned luxurious residences in London, in addition to stately homes located within the territories where their lands were located. They collectively controlled more than fifty percent of agricultural land in England.

The concept of separate spheres also emerged during this period, describing women's relationship with the private sphere of domestic life while men occupied with the public sphere of business, politics and social interaction. During the early 19th century in Britain, women were largely confined to the domestic sphere, with their primary roles centered on home management and motherhood. Society at large believed that finding fulfillment in domestic tasks enough for women, thus keeping them out of public life. However, societal attitudes gradually changed over time. women began to venture into traditionally male-dominated fields such as teaching and nursing, and the opportunities for white-collar jobs increased their status. These shifts, along with wider social and economic changes, contributed to reducing men's prejudice against women and expanding their opportunities ad influence throughout the 19th century in Britain.

The researcher chose the title: *The Representation of Social Stratification in Jane Austen's Persuasion*. The title illustrates that this thesis will analyze how *Persuasion* depicted the social stratification and also the impact to the characters. The thesis will also discuss how *Persuasion* reflects the Socialist feminism perspective that are relevant to social class and gender issue. This thesis will also relate the *Persuasion* to the historical, cultural, and social context in British society in the 19th century

1.2.   Statement of Problem

According to the background of the problem above, there are two questions that will be the main focuses on this research:

1. What are the effects of social stratification in shaping relationship among characters in *Persuasion*?
2. How does *Persuasion* reflect the social stratification of the early 19th century in England?

1.3.   Research Purposes

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the researcher is intended:

1. To find out what are the effects of social stratification in shaping relationship among characters in *Persuasion*.
2. To analyze how the novel *Persuasion* reflects the social stratification of the early 19th century in England.

1.4.   Research Significances

Based on the research background, this research is expected to provide insight and scientific contribution to literary studies, especially Socialist feminism studies. The researchers present an examination of class stratification depicted in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* utilizing Socialist feminism viewpoints in this study. This study employs Socialist feminist theory since the role of women in this novel is heavily influenced by the status of social stratification, as well as how they attempt

to struggle for their rights and freedom through marriage. As a result, this study can be utilized as a reference in subsequent studies that examine books using only one theory or integrating numerous ideas, particularly Socialist feminism. The findings of this study can provide various benefits, including:

Through this research, the researchers gained valuable experience in evaluating social stratification from a socialist feminism perspective. This study aims to contribute to literary analysis, particularly in the context of applying socialist feminism theory to novel studies. The primary benefit of this research is that it provides a detailed examination of the social stratification depicted in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* through the lens of socialist feminism. By doing so, it offers insights into how economic and gender inequalities shape characters and relationships within the novel, enriching our understanding of Austen's social commentary and the broader implications of social hierarchies in literature.

1.5. Definition of Key terms

This section provides precise definitions for the critical terms used throughout this research. These definitions will serve as a valuable reference, ensuring that all readers are aligned in their understanding of the terminology. The definition of social stratification, socialist feminism, character, and plot are included in this section. These definitions provide a foundational understanding of the key concepts explored in this research.

1. Social Stratification

Social Stratification is the categorization of society into groups based on various socioeconomic factors. These factors include wealth, income, race, education, gender, education, ethnicity, occupation, social status, and inherited power.

2. Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism is a branch of feminist theory that argues that the main cause of the oppression of women is capitalism. This feminist theory is based on the understanding of Marxism, proposed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

3. Character

A character in a novel is a person, animal being, creature, or thing that appears within the narrative. Writers use characters to perform actions, speak dialogue, and move the story along its plot line.

4. Plot

Plot in a novel is the interconnected sequences of events in the story. More than just telling what happens, the plot reveals the cause-and-effect relationship between the events that occur.

1.6.   Previous Studies

In this section, the researcher has presented several earlier studies that are pertinent to this topic. These previous studies serve as a source of inspiration for this research. Despite their variations, these studies share similar discussions and relate closely to the current research. By reviewing these earlier works, the researcher aims to build upon existing knowledge and highlight the connections and distinctions between past research and the present study. This comparison not only validates the relevance of the current research but also situates it within the broader academic conversation on social stratification and socialist feminism in literature. Those that have previously been conducted are listed below.

The first relevant previous studies that the researcher believes can help conducting this research is a thesis entitled *Social Discrimination on Woman Marriage in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility* (2022) written by Nita Nurhalifah. This research aims to explain the social discrimination against women's marriage in the literary work entitled Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen. The purpose of this study is to find out the form of social discrimination against marriage reflected in the main female characters in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility, and describe how Marxist Feminism is reflected in the characters Elianor and Marianne in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility.

Researchers used this study as a reference because of the similarities in the theories used, namely Marxist Feminism. The difference between Nita Nurhalifah's study and the researcher's is the object used. Nita used the object of the novel *Sense and Sensibility* while the researcher used the novel *Persuasion*. The topics discussed by these two studies are also different. The study conducted by Nita discusses the topic of social discrimination in marriage, while the topic discussed by the researcher is social stratification.

The second relevant study that researchers think can help conducting this research is an article entitled *Feminism Reflected in Pride and Prejudice Novel by Jane Austen* (2016) written by Suaidi, Rusfandi, and Trisno. This study contains two problems formulation to be analyzed: the issues of feminism reflected in the *Pride and Prejudice* novel and the dominant roles of women deserted in *Pride and Prejudice* novel. This study used feminism as its main theory with the descriptive qualitative method. This study is very helpful to researchers because the theories used are both feminism, although researchers specify the theory to Socialist Feminism. This study also discusses the role of women in early 19th century British society, which will also be discussed in the researcher's thesis.

The difference between Suaidi et al's study and the researcher's is the object used. Suaidi et al used the object of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, while the researcher used Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. In addition, Suaidi et al's study focuses on the role of women in the novel, while the researcher's thesis discusses the characters in the novel with the theory of Socialist feminism and how the role of social stratification according to the Socialist feminism point of view in British Society is depicted in the novel *Persuasion*.

The third relevant study that researchers think can help the conducting of this research is a publication article entitled *Social Stratification Reflected at Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice Novel (1813): A Sociological Approach* (2014) written by Mei Hariyanti. This study takes a sociological approach to the investigation of class stratification in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

From a sociological perspective, this study is based on a structural analysis of the novel *Pride and Prejudice* that identifies the relationship between the novel and the social context in early nineteenth-century English society. Based on the structural analysis, it is possible to conclude that Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* depicts the social reality of English society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, including social, economic, political, scientific technological, cultural, and religious components.

There are similarities and differences between Mei's study and the researcher's. The similarity is that both studies discuss the topic of social stratification depicted in Jane Austen's novels. The difference between Mei's study and the researcher's is the object of the novel, Mei uses the novel *Pride and Prejudice* while the researcher uses the novel *Persuasion*. The theory used is also different, the study written by Mei focuses on structural analysis while the researcher focuses on Socialist Feminism analysis.

The four relevant study that researchers think can help conducting this research is an article journal entitled *The Impact of Social Class in Jane Austen Persuasion* (2023) written by Livia K. Pinontoan, Elizabeth Z. Oroh, and Sarah Kamagi. Using a mimetic technique, this study exposes the impact of socioeconomic class in Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*. This study's findings indicate that socioeconomic class has an impact on human existence and society. Social class variations influence many elements of life, including lifestyle, career prospects, and social status inequalities. Because of the resemblance of the objects covered, especially Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*, as well as the discussion of social class, which is still strongly tied to social stratification, this research is used as a reference.

Although still related to social class, Livia et al's study has several differences with the researcher's thesis. The first difference is that Livia's study focuses on mimetic techniques to examine socioeconomic class in *Persuasion* novel, while the researcher's thesis examines *Persuasion* novel with Socialist Feminism which focuses on the role of social stratification in character development in *Persuasion*.

The fifth relevant study that researchers think can help conducting this research is a thesis entitled *Struggle of Marriage as A Result of Social Status Differences on Jane Austen's Persuasion Novel* (2022) written by Feroza Afinadya. This thesis is to analyze the marriage struggle as a result of social status in Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and to explain the reflection of the world vision of a society where the author lived in the novel and analyzed by using structuralism by Levi-Strauss. This study is taken as a reference because the topics and objects of study discussed are still similar to the researcher's research, although the theories used are different.

Despite the same object of study, there are some differences between Feroza's study and the researcher's thesis, namely the theory and topic of discussion. Feroza analyzes the novel *Persuasion* using the theory of structuralism by Levi Strauss, while the researcher uses the theory of Socialist Feminism to study the novel *Persuasion*. In addition, Feroza's study discusses the struggle of women to get married due to differences in social status, while the researcher's thesis discusses the role of social stratification in building relationships between characters in the novel *Persuasion*.