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**The Reflection of Gender Issue through Nature
in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice***

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to describe the gender issue in Regency Society reflected in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and to reveal how the environment and nature can reflect femininity and the relationship between men and women. The description of how nature will depict the gender perspective, social class, and the women' right and how the characters develop their relationship is one of the objectives in this research. The researcher would like see how the nature relates the relationship of the men and women in the novel with the help of the natural surroundings of the Regency society. The nature portrayed within *Pride and Prejudice* can also be looked at from gender perspective in order to help understand how Austen used the nature in her work to reflect the realities of gender differences in her society. The method of analysis is descriptive-qualitative method. The source of the data based on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. The research data were collected and analyzed using data analysis technique. The study found that this classic work of Austen' *Pride and Prejudice* is that the nature reflect the core differences between the sexes.

KEYWORDS: Gender, Pride and Prejudice, Austen, Nature.

First published in 1813, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* become a masterpiece of classic literature. In this novel, there are so many interesting things that can be look at. One of this is the depiction of the environment that reflects the gender characteristics of character in the novel. The effects will be analyzed from feminist point of view.

The natural of Georgian society is one of the factors that can be helpful to create the gender differences by analyzing how they related to the nature. By understanding how men and women see and related to nature we can see the differences between them, it is also to proof that both of them had each other. Nature in this context includes everything from the plants and trees to the weather while the term of the environment pertain to the surrounding, including both the living and the non-living things, such a house, gardens and people.

One of the most importances of the nature in *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen from the reflection of the Pemberley house owned by Mr. Darcy. It is apparent that this residence left the strong impression on Elizabeth and her feeling towards Mr. Darcy. Batey has acknowledged the importance of the nature in here:

Pemberley and its beautiful grounds play an important part in the plot of *Pride and Prejudice*. The heroine, who had been so against Mr. Darcy on first impression had to be shown that he was a man of morals and of good taste (Batey, 1996: 68).

In the novel we can see the importance of the nature, buildings, and the environments have on influencing the characters' emotion. It is clearly stated that the residence of Mr. Darcy was the first thing that make our Elizabeth, the heroine, fall for Mr. Darcy. So, the nature and the surrounding strengthen the argument that they truly have important part in the novel.

The representation of the nature was allowed by Austen to get the character's thought and feeling reflected in the novel. According to Snyder, the women who are the strongest and cleverer are those who clearly have connection with the nature. In his book, Snyder stated:

In a way, Austen's genius is in exposing the iniquities inherent in gentrification and possession, especially as women are reduced by these male constructs. Austen's strongest, cleverest women – those who resist the machinations and delusions of society – are the only persons shown to have an intimacy with Nature, a symbiosis embodying their desire for intimacy in partnership (Snyder, 1992: 148-149).

Nature is self has been compared to the women for a very long time. In Austen's time women were viewed as emotional thing, they would like to use their emotion in every aspects of their wild. They often viewed as very wild thing. The only possible people who can tamed them are the father or the husband, which by society standard are very rational. As were women, the nature was seen as such beautiful and elegant.

Burke in Snyder stated that the resemblance of the women and nature can be used to distinguished woman from man, 'elements of the Beautiful softness, smoothness, grace – (are) feminine, while he considered strength, power, and rationality masculine' (Snyder, 1992: 144). He suggested that those were the reason why man could not be compared to nature while woman can. It is know in the view of the 19th century society women were seen as over emotional and irrational creature. The men were seeing as a very rational creature.

Snyder also claimed that when people try to compare gender and nature in the novel, the masculinity itself can be compared to dynamism and boldness, but the then femininity can resembles delicacy, passivity and reflection. He says that author such as Austen uses the nature in order to describe, 'Community, sympathy, delight, generosity, intimacy and connection,' (Snyder, 1992: 145). All these aspects that have link to the nature could be found in her work, *Pride and Prejudice*.

The nature and literature are actually very closely interwoven. Austen already allows her reader to relate the novel and the imagine of the surrounding in her novel by vividly describe the nature and the environment. The women characters in her work clearly right for this explanation. Nature have been mentioned several time in the in the novel, it was described as tamed and forced to submit to the human maintenance, like the gardens, the estates and the streams.

In this study, Austen's male characters in *Pride and Prejudice* set out to tame and domesticate the female's characters, it just like how they did it with the nature. However, not all of the female characters behave as the way they should behave, especially the leading female protagonist, Elizabeth. This study will reveal the nature portrayed within *Pride and Prejudice* can be seen through a gender point of view.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method that the research uses in this study is descriptive qualitative method. This method lies on the library research. Library research is one the research that uses the reading text as source of the data. The source of the data based on the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. The research data were collected and analyzed using data analysis technique. The feminism and also stereotypes of gender will be used in this study to analyze the data.

Nature and environment are linked to the setting of the story, and through this the reflection of gender issue can be seen clearly. Then, this study sees how the equality of the leading characters in the novel. The last is the conclusion was taken and written down after all the data were analyzed and interpreted.

THE RELATIONS OF POWER, MONEY AND GENDER

During the period of early 19th Century the condition of women are not the same as now days. The setting of this novel take place exactly in the 19th Century and

the center of the story was in the Bennet family. The family consists of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet along with their five daughters. The oldest is Jane, second is Elizabeth, the middle daughter is Mary, then Lydia and the youngest one is Kitty. The Bennet family is one of the example of how the family in this century living conditions. Also, we can see the difference between other families than the Bennet, the wealtier one for example. Their lives are very clearly portrayed the differences between the rich and the poor.

One of the ways to increase the status of women at the time was marriage. Somehow marriage became the first way to climb the ladder of the society. During this period marriage was an important aspect of the society and the key of the financial security for women regardless of their family wealth.

In the story, Mr. Bennet has no son to inherit his wealth. At that time if a family did not have a son, then the one who has a right to inherit is his close family, and should be a male. Because of this case, the only way for his daughters to manage after the death of their father is to marry a wealthy man.

White in Looser said “Unalterable after all, is the fact that each of Austen’s novel relies on the marriage plot as its central structuring device” (Looser, 1995: 71). This quote clearly acknowledges that marriage is somehow forced upon women by the view of theirs society. It was crucial for women to married during this period. Kubitschek in Fisher and Silber claims in this period women did not get substantial education and that their only employment opportunities were to work as servant or factory workers. She also comments that these jobs were very poorly paid and that it was struggle for women to manage on such a wage (Fisher and Silber, 2003: 237). So their best interest is laid on marriage and the support of their husbands from the financial field.

The same subject also discussed by Berglund, “marriage was after all almost the only way for a woman of the eighteenth century to secure home of her own” (Berglund, 1993: 159). She also mentioned that in Austen’s novel the men are very aware of the condition that they are the one who provide the home for the women. This statement made us aware of the power that man’s holding in the eighteenth century, at least this are among those who were very fortune enough to get their own home. Berglund also discussed this kind of power, “In the world of Austen...men have the power not to only to provide the women with a home but also very often kicking her out of it” (Berglund, 1993: 165). On the other hand, some of them could continue staying in their family home, but this is not very admirable in the society’s view.

People who have more wealth then the other are expected to have beautiful estate. They were also expected to have beautiful garden. Why? Because the garden will be reflect to their social status and power. It is assumed that gardens were evidence of someone’s taste and sense of style and it was also a fashion statement among them. When a garden has out of date design, society would seen it as unattractive and it has not value to the wealthy family who belong.

Pope says of the importance of the balance, moderation and good style when commenting on the appropriate maintenance of a garden, “But treat the goddess like a modest fair, / Nor over-dress, nor lover wholly bare’ (Pope, 2008: 69). A garden which is creating overly embellished and indulgent displays as much as bad taste as one which has received no thought or attention. One of the defining factors in good taste is modesty. The uses of a boastful and inconsiderate of riches are needed to be detested. It was then to be assumed in the society values of the women that they

should have to be modest, especially in the way they should dress and act around the people.

Beautiful and elegant are mean not to be overbearing and spoilt. To be polite is one of the values they expected to have. Women should not asking back if someone asked them a question.

A beautiful garden, cultivated with good taste will show us that you are indeed rich in wealth but also could give a reflection to the strength of the character and appropriate taste when designing the estate. This is related to the Pope's statement about the needed of moderation in beauty and the life style for people who have wealth more is not to be admired. It is because it just going to reflect the greediness of someone's character.

FEMINISM

The connection between the Georgian society and the modesty in women and the reflection of it can be achieved through someone's garden. It is related to the feminism standing and it is need to be discussed.

What is feminism? The definition itself gives several different views of feminism. Morris have saying on this, he said it just a matter of political perception. She argues that it is based on two fundamental premises:

- (1) That gender differences is a foundation of a structural inequality between the women and men, by which women suffer systematic social injustices, and
- (2) that the inequality between the sexes is not the result of biological necessity but is produced by the cultural constructions of gender difference (Morris, 1993:1).

She acknowledges that these different assumptions are just excused made for women to make them seem subordinated. Morris also stated that the different of the culture

of each country is one factor that made differences in feminine characteristics (Morris, 1993: 2).

Young also has the same opinion as Morris. According to Young in with regard to feminism in historical context, the situation of caused by their lack of freedom in a male dominated society; ‘In all cases, her identity and her fate are defined and controlled by men – by fathers, husbands or seducers (Young, 1999: 119). It seems to prove the opinion of people that the destiny of Georgian women’s lay on the male power. Their identity was created by the values they got from the men in their life.

The fathers are the first to control the women’s fate. When they get married it will be their husbands who control their fate till the day they die. It clearly shows us that women in the 19th century have no control towards their fate or identity. From the first day the women entered this world as a baby their fate already being taken from them. They were controlled by men from the first till the end. In Austen’s novel this issues are portrayed vividly. The wealthy men were the one who tame and domesticated the nature around their estates, the very similar way the women were tamed and domesticated by the men and society.

Young also argues that ‘The sum of the matter is that unless Women repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to law, and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself’ (Young, 1999: 121). This quotation clearly makes an assumption that the women need to sacrifice their self and their identity. They need to do that in order to please her husband and everyone around her, but not themselves. Those pre – emancipated women clearly has but one duty, it was to please everyone and for them to do that they must lose

their womanliness. The very good comparison for women to parrots in the cage was made by Young:

If we come to think that the nursery and the kitchen are the natural sphere of a woman, we have done so exactly as English children come to think that a cage is the natural sphere of a parrot: because they have never seen one anywhere else (Young, 1999:20).

The 'natural sphere' here is a problem for women. It was seen as a place to spend their entire time; this place is referring to kitchen and nursery. The using of parrot as an example by Young because the children always seen and believed that the parrot's natural sphere is in cage since they have never seen anywhere else beside the cage. The same case happened to the women because they were always seen in the kitchen, their natural sphere, centuries ago, so when they were seen somewhere beside the kitchen it was so very wrong and strange. Young is trying hard to say that it is actually so very hard to change the assumptions made for women because their role have been established in the 1800's society way of thinking. Young took this example to explain further, arguing that the example concerning women and the parrot exemplifies;

The kind of impossible box in which independent – minded women found themselves at the end of the nineteenth century. The absurdity of traditional attitudes towards women is evident only through an analogy that is itself absurd (Young, 1999: 212).

The traditional attitudes that exist in the society made the women put in symbolic box and it hard to get out of it. This traditional attitudes towards women need to go beyond. The first step the women must take is venture out of the box and the struggle to change the society's attitude. If they can handle this, they are one step

closer to take care of their self and in the future they will not need wealthy men as a husband to domesticate them as they do with their gardens and estates.

Young also claimed that, 'women were seldom seen outside the cage of conventional domesticity and were not readily accepted in roles that seemed to challenge traditional assumptions about feminine identity' (Young, 1999:122). From this quotation we can clearly see that the women were not allowed to explore what they are capable to achieve because they were expected to do what the society expect them

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The Relation of Gender and Nature Imagery in *Pride and Prejudice*

As a good author it seems that Austen wants her reader to be intimate with the surrounding. This is happened because she wanted to show how the places and surrounding can influence the emotion characters. She used strong imagery to achieve this:

They entered the woods, and bidding adieu to the river for a while, ascended some of the higher grounds; whence, in spots where the opening of the trees gave the eye power to wander, were many charming views of the valley, the opposite hills, with the long range of woods overspreading many, and occasionally part of the stream (Austen, 1993: 212).

The using of powerful imaginary by Austen is to make realistic scene of nature, in the same time the lovely view is very charming and romantic and clearly reflect the love and friendship theme in the story. Happiness and romance have been described very particular in the word 'charming'. This passage is clearly describing the garden in Pemberley estate and it is also describing the character of Mr. Darcy.

Mr. Bingley is one of the wealthy men in the story. He also owns a large estate where he throws ball for his new neighbors. His estate is a symbol of power not only in wealth term but also the power of masculine. It is true that the one who owns a large estate is usually men. This estate then reflects back on their social status and power. It is actually became the symbol of masculine conquest to control nature. It is important not to confuse the architecture with the surrounding nature since they symbolize different things, however in order to analyses the nature we should consider the estates because they are connected each other. The amount of their wealth and the size of the house that belonged to the owner are reflected in the presentation of the surrounding gardens.

It is true that women rarely own large estates with beautiful gardens, but there is one exception in this novel. The lady is Lady Catherin who is a widow who lives in her beautiful and great mansion. This condition is fortunate enough for women at the time to hold a power but only through money. Compare to Mr. Darcy's there are very particular differences between the two of them. These differences can be seriously highlighted at the time Elizabeth visits Lady Catherine:

After sitting a few minutes, they were all sent to one of the windows, to admire the view, Mr. Collins attending them to point out its beauties, and Lady Catherine kindly informing them that it was much better worth looking in the summer (Austen, 1993: 138).

The emphasis when we describe the Lady Catherine house is more on the nature and the surroundings than on the house itself. This can be seen as a sign of women who have closer relationship with the nature than the men through the nature's beauty and domestication. Outside of the house is very significant because how beautiful the surroundings are. We can say that without the nature surround it, the

house would its beauty and it will be just a building. Therefore we can recognize the power of the nature even though the beauty and influence is not valued as highly by men as it is by women. On the other hand, the men were allowed to do as they like and it is their outward appearance and wealth that the society notices. For example, if we look at Mr. Darcy's house it is very clearly describe the outside rather than the interior or the surrounding nature. This is actually can be seen as the sign that the outside strength and scale of a building can reflect masculinity. Mr. Darcy's mansion, Pemberley, is a significant symbol of masculinity when Elizabeth and her uncle and aunt, the Gardiner go for visit in there.

It was a large, handsome, stone building standing well on rising ground, and backed by a ridge of high woody hills; and in front a stream of some natural importance was swelled into a greater, but without any artificial appearance (Austen, 1993: 206).

This passage clearly shows us the description of the estate could also be a description of the owner, Mr. Darcy, but also the general description of the masculine power. The masculine strength of Mr. Darcy is reflected in the description of the estate. Men are as strong as the stone, and they always compared to it. They were always seen as the gender that stands steadily against the vulnerability of the women. 'Handsome' and 'large' are the adjectives that can be associated with the men masculinity. It is because they are often seeing as being large and if they are large we can also refer to them as handsome and 'real man'.

When Elizabeth's uncle wants to take a walk around the park in his visit with Elizabeth and his to Pemberley, it could not happen because the park is too far for him. The par is domesticated and therefore reinforces the image of Mr. Darcy as a powerful man. We can assume by analyzing what Mr. Gardiner says that the powerful man like

Mr. Darcy is expected to own such a garden. His park is situated beyond of a walk because how large it is, symbolically stating his power as few of people could conquer such a walk;

They crossed it by a simple bridge, in character with the general air of the scene; it was a spot less adorned than any they had yet visited; and the valley, here contracted into a glen, allowed room only for the stream, and a narrow walk amidst the rough coppice-wood which bordered it. Elizabeth longed to explore its windings (Austen, 1993: 212).

We can see the bridge in here as a way of society to symbolize women as being simple and also not allowing them to be anything but simple. The stream can be analyzed as being undomesticated, uncontrollable and unchangeable, this is reflect back to men – that they must change their ideas about the way they see women if there is to be any positive social progress.

This can be seen in the beginning of the story; Mr. Darcy could not see himself suitable with every girl in Longbourn, ‘Darcy, on the contrary, had seen a collocation of people in whom there was little beauty and no fashion, for none of whom he had felt the smallest interest, and from none received either attention or pleasure’ (Austen, 1993: 16). He sure felt like this in the opening of the story, but through the story he then changed and falls for Elizabeth. We can see that the changeable aspects of the nature reflect back on Mr. Darcy’s changeable side.

Nature and Equality in Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth’s Relationship

The first time Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth begin their relationship everybody seems doubt about them. Everybody thought they were not equal, especially in their social class. The next quotation will show us an evidence of Mr. Darcy’s and Elizabeth’s love toward each other as their love was allowed to bloom in the middle of

Mother Earth element; ‘They walked on, without knowing in what direction. There was too much to be thought, and felt, and said for attention to any other objects’ (Austen, 1993: 346-347). This quotation was taken from the novel when Darcy and Elizabeth decided to engaged while they were out for a walk. They both finally acknowledge their feeling towards each other and they both empathize.

The most important thing from that passage is when they were out for a walk they decided to talk about something very crucial for their future, which is their marriage. By reading this passage before we find out that their love conquers everything else.

Austen constructed the importance of nature towards the characters feeling. Darcy and Elizabeth were out in nature which is domesticated and tamed but not in the same way as the gardens. She also feels more at ease when she is out in the nature. So, the nature became the neutral ground for Elizabeth and Darcy to decide about their future. Austen keeps coming back to it to show us the particular idea about the nature; ‘after walking several miles in a leisurely manner, and too busy to know anything about it they found at last, on examining their watches, that it was time to be at home (Austen, 1993:350).

The environment can be seen as a neutral ground and be a symbolic for the equality of gender since it is the only place Elizabeth can escape the views that society had about the women during the 19th century. But unfortunately the equality is not changing anything in the biological senses, but only in cultural context and social. Darcy has never felt superior towards Elizabeth because he is man. Also Elizabeth never feels inferior towards Darcy because she is a woman. This walk of them can be interpreted as a way for Darcy and Elizabeth to leave their tight cultural world behind.

They leave their pride and prejudice behind and they could accepted each other as they are.

CONCLUSION

In the novel it can be seen how Austen describe the environment and the natural surrounding very carefully in order to explain the difference about the two genders. She describes the nature as something domesticated and tamed. We can see the comparison between nature and the genders and how the Georgian society viewed them differently. From this comparison we can draw a conclusion that gender inequalities and the nature description share a lot of important similarities in the novel.

Nature is described as being domesticated and tamed, yet viewed as something beautiful. The beautiful and yet tamed nature is the reflection of the typical female characteristics. Finally we can state that the description of nature in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* are an outstanding tool to understand and analyzed the relationship between men and women and comprehend the exception of masculinity and femininity during the Georgian era. The relationship between the different genders was offered very clear in the novel and the nature can reflect and symbolize these differences. It is clearly displayed in the novel that men try to tame and domesticated women as they do with nature.

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