

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

The reign of Queen Victoria is characterized by a rapid development of public, social, political, religious life, and literature. There were many novelists in the Victorian Period who are still well known until now, such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, the Bronte Sisters, Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, and so on. Most of them criticized the society in which they lived. The state of society in that period was characterized by the large difference between the rich and the poor caused by social stratification. According to Horton, “social stratification is a ranking of people in status levels according to some criteria of superiority or inferiority” (65).

Stratification implies a hierarchical arrangement of social classes, a stratification of social classes mostly based on the economic status or political status in the society. According to Tyson, “for Marxism, getting and keeping economic power is the motive behind all social and political activities, including education, religion, government, the arts, and so on” (53). Economy has a strong influence in determining social and political power. In our daily live, money has great influences in people’s lives. They have to work hard to earn money. Without money, they cannot fulfill their needs, such as food, education, and many else.

In the nineteenth century, the term social classes began to be used in the analysis of social inequalities that stem from economic conditions of a society.

The philosopher who was very concerned about the social classes was Karl Marx and Max Weber. According to Tormey and Jules, “social class is a group of people who exhibit the same function in the organization of production” (214). Social classes are distinguished by different positions which control the means of production. The most fundamental concept by Karl Marx is all changes in society are caused by socioeconomic structure in society. Economy is the most influential factor in society. Ideology, belief, culture, law, language and religion, contain meanings when associated with economic context (Beilharz 2).

According to Beilharz, “class is a group of people who occupy the same position in the production, distribution and trade” (36). Weber complements the views of Marx who stated that class is just based not on authority of capital, but also the opportunity to achieve profit in commodity and labor markets. Both declare a class as one's position in the economic hierarchy.

The nineteenth century England is known as the Victorian Period. During this period, the industrial revolution has great influence in England. The aim of the industrial revolution era was to maximise the natural force and machinery in the industries. From this production activities, two social economic classes arose, namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Giddens 31). The bourgeoisie are those who own the means of production. It is the class who control the world's natural, economic, and human resources (Tyson 54). The proletariat are those who do not own land and means of production (Hodges 227). The bourgeoisie are concerned to gain profit by minimizing cost as low as possible. The proletariat felt

that they were forced to work hard to gain profit but on the other hand, their rights were not given much attention.

Many issues which appeared in the Victorian literature deal with the gap between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, example *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity* by Charles Dickens, *Vanity Fair* by William Thackeray, *The Warden* by Anthony Trollope, and *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy. Since the thesis writer is interested in a novel, the thesis writer chooses to analyze *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy.

The thesis writer is interested in Thomas Hardy because he lived in an era of change. The author of *Jude the Obscure*, Thomas Hardy, was an English novelist and poet. Thomas Hardy was born on 2 June 1840 in the east of Dorchester in Dorset. He was the son of Thomas Hardy, a master mason or building contractor, and Jemima Hand, a woman having a literary interest (Thompson 5). He was one of the few writers to succeed as both a major poet and novelist. He began to write poetry, but none of it was published. His first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, written in 1867, was never published. His first published novel was *Desperate Remedies* in 1871. But his first success began with the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* in 1874. Thomas Hardy next wrote *The Return of the native*, published in 1878. His last novel was *Jude the Obscure* in 1895. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923 (Williams 108). On 27 November 1912, Mrs. Hardy passed away. The death of his wife made him desperate. On 10 February 1914, he married Florence Emily, a

woman who previously worked as his assistant and who was about forty years younger than him. Thomas Hardy died on 11 January 1928 (Bakker 77).

Thomas Hardy's reputation as a novelist is based on his ability "... to relate a tragic story of passion and make the setting its metaphor, and to enchant the scene with an extraordinary character." (Adelman 12). The setting in most of his novels is set in rural England in and around Wessex. The region became familiar as the "Wessex of Thomas Hardy". Furthermore, according to Scott James, "Hardy's novels are richer than his poems in fresh attentive description of natural objects... that form the great poetic images of his novels" (15).

Thomas Hardy lived in England during the Victorian Period. Through his writings, he depicted the society at that time. The development of economic and industrial sectors in England grew rapidly under the reign of Queen Victoria. However, the Victorian Period was also known as a hard period after the booming of Industrial Revolution in the previous period. Man power was replaced by machines. It created a great shock in the economy and social life of the people. The rich or the bourgeoisie, who had power over finance became wealthier every day. Meanwhile, the proletariat or the working class lost their jobs and suffer a common exploitation. The social problems which happened in that time can be found in *Jude the Obscure*.

Jude the Obscure was published in 1895. This novel is about the life of someone who lives under such pressure from the society. The novel portrays the social classes in the Victorian Period. Jude Fawley is the main character of the novel. Jude is a working class, he is a village stonemason in the southern England

region of Wessex who dreams to be a scholar at Christminster. In his spare time while working in his aunt's bakery, he learns by himself Greek and Latin languages. He tries to enter the university, but finally he was not able to attend university because of financial reasons.

One of the interesting things found in *Jude the Obscure* can be seen from the depiction of the effects of the Industrial Revolution in economic condition, which is the main root of problems in social class conflict between the upper class and the lower class. The upper class is the oppressor who exploits the oppressed. They come from upper class who have much money. They have power and authority to push the oppressed; they are capitalists. They have money and the owner of the property. The lower class is the oppressed who strive against social, law, and economic segregation. Those who do not have money and low education are called labor. This story shows much conflict between the upper class and the lower class. It happens because of the existence of social difference in England during Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century.

The issue of social classes in the novel has captured the interest of the writer of this thesis. The social class is an interesting topic to discuss because this condition is still happening in society. Until now society still discriminates someone based on several criteria such as race, religion, economy, jobs, education, and others.

It will be a good thing if people can be united without discriminating their social status. The writer chose *Jude the Obscure*, the novel written by Thomas Hardy, since this novel can represent the above issues.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

The background of the study leads to some statements that are going to be discussed in this thesis. The following statements are formulated to make a clear focus on the analysis:

1. What does *Jude the Obscure* criticize in the conflicts social classes of the Victorian Period?
2. How do the oppressions of the main character occur in *Jude the Obscure*?
3. How does Jude react against the oppressions from the bourgeoisie?

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze several point of criticism portrayed in *Jude the Obscure* on the conflicts of social classes of Victorian period
2. To examine how the oppressions of the main character occur in *Jude the Obscure*.
3. To describe Jude's reaction against the oppressions from the bourgeoisie.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The author hopes that by knowing the conflicts of social classes in England, especially in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, the reader would have clearer picture about the pressure and the reaction from the main character, Jude Fawley. Moreover by analysing the main character in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, this thesis tries to give the reader broader knowledge about the life of

the proletariat in the Victorian period. Finally, the writer hopes that this thesis can be useful in the study of literature or can be used as a reference for the future research about the proletariat or working class in the Victorian period.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

This study concern with the conflicts of social classes in the nineteenth century in England. The analysis is focused on the main character, Jude Fawley, about the pressure and his reaction against the oppression. Furthermore, this study focuses on the society represented in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, which obviously showed injustice caused by the great gap between the rich and the poor during that period of time. The base of the deep analysis this thesis is based on the Marxist theory which is helpful to explain on the conflict of social classes in Victorian period.

1.6. Theoretical Background

In analysing social classes in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Marxist theory is used. Marxist theory is one of literary theories which started to appear in the middle decades of nineteenth century. According to Giddens, "Marx divides at least four major themes as the subject of the general conception of thinking in his works which are theory of society, theory of classes, theory of government, and theory of ideology" (Giddens 26). Karl Marx's social class theory used as the main tool for analysis. Marx asserts the materialist concept in which people are considered as pyramid. The bottoms of the base material is composed of

economic and above are political, legal, and then thought (Giddens 28). The theory of Karl Marx related to class division believes that the material or economic condition influences the human life.

Based on the social classes theory of Karl Marx, this study focuses itself with the existence of social classes caused by the capitalist system: “the aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange” (Barry 106). The rapid growth in technology, education, and capital had launched the industrial revolution in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Paul Horton discussed the capitalism of the upper class toward the lower class.

capitalism will inevitably destroy itself by polarizing the society into two classes - an ever richer bourgeoisie, the owner of the means of production, and an ever poor proletariat, the propertyless workers (Horton 62).

Based on theories of Karl Marx, this study concerns itself with class differences, economic as well as the implications of the capitalist system: “Marx’s concern over the rise of a capitalist economy was a concern for the effects of capitalism on human values” (Tyson 61). This is related to the goal of applying Marxist criticism to analyze several point of criticism portrayed in *Jude the Obscure* on the conflicts of social classes of Victorian period. As stated before, the England’s economic depression caused the economic gap in the Victorian period. Therefore, it stated that history has a big portion to influence the life condition after the historical moment occurred.

Class struggle is a key evidence that proves the involvement of human actions in historical change. The history has been shaped through the struggle of the lower class to achieve fairness and equality. In a capitalist society, bourgeoisie are more superior than the proletarians. In comparison to the lower class, it is easier for the upper class to control society (Tyson 54). For Marx, class struggle is one of prominent causes of social changes.

The conflicts of social classes between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, inequality, poverty, suffering, and exploitation can be seen in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. It visualizes the social condition and the great gap between the rich and the poor in the Victorian period that makes the poor suffer. The most obvious thing is dissatisfaction from lower class toward the upper and the middle class. *Jude the Obscure* is the last novel by Thomas Hardy which bear vivid criticism toward the society in England.

1.7. Method of the Study

This study would discuss the ways Thomas Hardy criticizes the nineteenth century Victorian society. This thesis uses qualitative research. Qualitative research is all about the understanding and exploring the issues to be discussed deeper. There are some steps in collecting the data. Firstly, the writer will close read the selected texts, which is fundamental for interpreting a literary work. By this step, the writer will able to gain important ideas presented in the novel. The second step is identifying parts of the text which describe social classes of the Victorian period. Thirdly, the writer will analyze in what ways the selected part of

the texts criticize social classes in the Victorian period. This is to answer the first question of the research. Fourthly, the writer examines parts of the text which deal with the oppressions of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie. Through this step, the second problem could be answered. Lastly, the author identifies parts of the text which discuss the reaction of the main character against the oppressions of the bourgeoisie. By this step, the last question could be answered. Then the writer will synthesize the findings into the conclusion.

There are two kinds of sources that will be used in this thesis; primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. Meanwhile, secondary sources are books and articles on Marxist theories especially class theory, social condition of the Victorian period, and other related sources.

1.8. Definition of Key Term

In order to clarify some of important key terms used in this thesis, here are the definition of those key terms:

Bourgeoisie : those who control the world's natural, economic, and human resources (Tyson 54)

Class : system of ranks based on heredity and economic order, as the result of social stratification in a society. (Parkin 26)

Marxism : was first theorized by Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German, and looks at everything through an economic viewpoint. It

focuses on the economic realities of human culture.

(Tyson 53)

Proletariat : the majority of the global population who live in substandard conditions and who have always performed the manual labor. (Tyson 54)

Victorian period : the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) is characterized by a rapid development in nearly every sphere of public life, social, political, religious, and literary. (Bakker 62)