



INTENDED READER PERCEPTION OVER MRS. BENNET'S CHARACTER IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVEL PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

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Abstract

The portraits of women in literary works are very diverse. The reader has an important role in interpreting issues and phenomena in the work through a response. To see the reader response, a literary reception approach is used, an approach that involves the reader as the main object. This study aims to reveal intended reader perceptions of Mrs. Bennet's character in Jane Austen's novel Pride and Prejudice by using literary reception theory in a synchronous method. A qualitative research method was applied by collecting primary data from participants in the form of responses from the intended reader in the different period, using Jauss's literary reception approach. The results show that the readers' responses to Mrs. Bennet's character, whether as a woman, wife, or mother, were quite diverse. It also shows that gender, religion, environment, some particular traditions, space, and time are things that greatly influence the reader's response. Then it shows the intended reader's reception towards Mrs. Bennet's character is shaped by experience, the horizon of expectation, aesthetic distance, and the space and time of the reader in the different period

Kata kunci: *Literary Reception, Pride and Prejudice, Reader Response*

Abstrak

Potret perempuan dalam karya sastra sangat beragam. Pembaca berperan penting dalam menafsirkan isu-isu dan fenomena dalam karya tersebut melalui sebuah tanggapan. Untuk mengetahui tanggapan pembaca tersebut digunakan pendekatan resepsi sastra, yaitu pendekatan yang melibatkan pembaca sebagai objek utama. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap persepsi pembaca pada periode tertentu terhadap karakter Mrs. Bennet dalam novel Pride and Prejudice karya Jane Austen. Studi ini menggunakan teori resepsi sastra dengan metode sinkron. Metode penelitian kualitatif diterapkan dengan mengumpulkan data primer dari partisipan berupa tanggapan pembaca tertentu yaitu dalam kurun waktu yang berbeda, yaitu dengan menggunakan pendekatan resepsi sastra Jauss. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa respon pembaca terhadap karakter Mrs. Bennet baik sebagai perempuan, istri, maupun ibu cukup beragam. Juga terlihat bahwa jenis kelamin, agama, lingkungan, beberapa tradisi tertentu, ruang, dan waktu adalah hal-hal yang sangat mempengaruhi respon pembaca. Dengan demikian, penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerimaan pembaca pada periode yang berbeda terhadap tokoh Mrs. Bennet dibentuk oleh pengalaman, cakrawala pengharapan, jarak estetik, serta ruang dan waktu pembaca dalam periode yang berbeda.

Kata Kunci : Resepsi Sastra, Pride and Prejudice, Reader Respon



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INTRODUCTION

In literary works, the depiction of women is very diverse, depending on the discourse, issue, and other things instead that the author wants to lift some in his work. Several works make female characters the main point of meeting or interaction between the text and the reader. Gusti Ayu Praminatih and Homsatun Nafiah (2018), a study that analyzes the keywords and frequent phrases of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* by Fischer-Starcke (2009), the research shows that in that era, women were used to raising the social status of a family through marriage. Women live in the shadow of a strong patriarchal tradition, and are presented by women who are tough to cross these social boundaries. So, often readers expect the content of a literary text, especially on a character.

In a literary receptions, the role of readers who are completely ignorant of the process of creativity plays an important role in research, because readers who enjoy, judge, and make use of literary works, even writers who know the ins and outs of their work, are not considered their existence. In a study, studying and or discussing literary works, both novels, and short stories, there are two types of readers, namely expert readers and intended readers.

According to Jauss, in responding to literary works, readers always form the aesthetic elements through the meeting between the horizon of expectations, the form of the text, and prevailing literary norms. The reader as the giver of meaning will always be determined by space, time, socio-cultural group, and experience. This is because in perceiving a literary work; the reader not only gives a single meaning but also other meanings that will enrich the literary work. To conduct a study on the reader's response to a literary work, a reception approach is used.

The reception approach is a literary genre that examines literary texts by considering the reader as the giver of speech or response. In giving remarks and responses, of course, it is influenced by factors of space, time, and social class. Literary reception is intended as the reader gives meaning to the literary work, they have read so that they can react or respond to it. Some responses may be passive, namely about how the reader understands a literary work so that the reader can see the aesthetic value that exists in a literary work. The



aesthetic value that is meant includes the epic of the writer pouring his ideas into the literary work. With this in mind, it makes literary reception a literary criticism theory that can be carried out in general and academically.

The most important point in the literary reception approach is how the role of (each) reader - with all its typical similarities and differences – in interpreting the text (literature) begins to be taken into account.

To conduct this study, the researcher used one kind of literary works novel, as the object of this study. Specifically, one of the characters in that novel.

By 2020, Five Books which is one of the websites participating in the Amazon Associate program and earn money from qualified purchases. They asked experts to recommend the best five books on their subject and explain their choices in an interview. From the results obtained, *Pride and Prejudice* belonging to Jane Austen managed to come out as one of the five most recommended book experts with more than a thousand interviews that have been made.

Austen's work was published on January 28, 1813, and took the title of *Pride and Prejudice*. This work is Austen's second novel, after *Sense and Sensibility* (is his first work published under the pseudonym "A Lady" in 1811). Goodreads is an American social catalog website that allows individuals to search its database of books, annotations, quotes, and reviews, assessing *Pride and Prejudice* as a form of struggle that can be done by a female writer.

Jane Austen, who is also famous for its satirical genre, devoted all social structures and phenomena and a few feminist ideas that occurred in their time, at the end of the 19th century. There are so many phenomena, issues, problems, and topics at the same time that Austen writes down in *Pride and Prejudice* where this is still relevant to talk about in the 21st century. Not only settings, plots, and language style, to write down the ideas, but she also describes and narrates it well in characterizing every character in the *Pride and Prejudice*.

So that in a literary reception approach, a new text has meaning if it has gone through the reading process. This is mean that the text requires an impression that is imposible



without readers. Returning to the literary approach itself that bases itself on the statement that the work since the issuance always get a response from the reader. The response given by the reader is a response or acceptance directly from something by someone. In other words also referred to as perception. Based on these opinions, the reader reception can be concluded that reader perception is the studies of readers' response to a literary work as a giver of the meaning based on the perception of the reader itself (according to its knowledge and experience). This understanding will be used as basis for footing in this perception research.

This research focuses on the reception by intended readers to Mrs. Bennet's character in the *Pride and Prejudice* novel using a literary reception synchronically.

From the focus of the research, the formulation of the problem was obtained for this study is "How the intended reader's reception to Mrs. Bennet's character in the *Pride and Prejudice* novel?"

This study aims to find several things based on a novel *Pride and Prejudice* written by Jane Austen, namely describing the reception of intended reader against the character of Mrs. Bennet in the *Pride and Prejudice* novel.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher used the qualitative research method. According to Parkinson and Drislane (2011), qualitative research is research using methods such as participants, observation study cases that result in a narrative, and descriptive account of a setting or practice. This statement is in line with the method that was used in this research. This study uses the reader reception approach synchronously to reveal the intended reader reception to literary works.

In other hand, conducted a study related to literary reception, shall be done in two methods namely the synchronous reception method and the diachronic reception method. These two methods are distinguished by the appearance of responses from readers on the literary works they read.

Literary reception research using the diachronic method is a literary reception research conducted on readers' responses in several periods. But the time period in question is still within one span of time. Generally research on diachronic reception is carried out on the responses of readers in the form of literary criticism, both contained in the mass media



and in scientific journals. While reception research using the synchronous method is a literary reception research that uses the responses of contemporary readers, meaning that the readers used as respondents are in one time period. Reception research with this method can be done by analyzing the responses of contemporary readers using interview techniques and questionnaire techniques. Therefore, this synchronous reception research can be classified as experimental research.

In this study, the researcher used the literary reception approach by Hans Robert Jauss (1960) to see the intended reader reception to one of the characters in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. This is in line with research on literary reception in its application refers to the process of processing reader responses to literary works that are read.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The primary data in this study is collected by the researcher from the results of interviews with the researcher and the participants (which in this study are called Intended Readers) related to the reception of the character of Mrs. Bennet in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. This is a direct source for obtaining data on the issues that were conducted in this study.

FINDING

In this study, data were obtained from interviews with participants. Participants who participate in this study were randomly selected by researchers and numbered 10 people who had read the novel *pride and prejudice*. Participants consisted of women as well as men who have different socio-cultural and professional backgrounds such as workers, housewives, reviewers, and some students. Technically, the participants have different experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds.

In this study, researcher used interview techniques to obtain and collect data. An interview is a process of obtaining information by way of Q&A using a tool called an interview guide (question item). In the interview guide, there are



several lists of questions that have been formulated by researcher based on Jauss's Horizon of Expectation Concept through her 7 theses, which will shape the reader's reception of the text. This refers to the theory or approach used in this research, namely reader perception (literary reception).

DISCUSSION

The presentation of the results of this study is outlined based on the research problems studied. As previously discovered, 10 participants in the study had read Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. The description of the results begins with the exposure of readers' responses to the character of Mrs. Bennet in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

According to the theory put forward by Jauss in his seven theses on the Horizon of Expectation, especially the first to fourth theses which says that the reader's experience, horizon of expectation, aesthetic distance, period and socio-culture will form the horizon of the reader's expectation and become a reference for them to respond to every situation or found a new things. Therefore, the researcher asked some questions to the participants to see their responses to some common things and the character of Mrs. Bennet itself.

Experience and socio-cultural background greatly influence the reader's response to the female figure, whether it is a mother or a wife. The responses presented by the above readers are very diverse. Not only that, the response is defined by the reader from general to detail.

Experience and socio-cultural background greatly influence the reader's response to the problem of women who do not receive formal education. So that some readers do not mind it, with non-formal education for women is enough. However, with the element of contemporary spirit possessed by every reader, so



that some readers consider formal education is something that every woman must have, and will be useful for her later when she grows up as a supporter of the values, privileges, and qualities of women themselves.

Socio-cultural background greatly influences the reader's response to the issue of women who do not have jobs. Some readers responded that this is not a significant problem, with various reasons saying that women are the responsibility of their parents, while a wife is the responsibility of her husband, and has a responsibility to control his own family. But some other readers think that work is the most important part for a woman. Because of this, women will be seen and respected by their fellow women, and can become independent without the need for men's help in doing some work.

Reader Response to Mrs. Bennet's Character

Reader's response about the character of Mrs. Bennet, who tends to be described as a good mother, is sometimes a little selfish. Mrs. Bennett is described as a good mother figure because everything she does is merely a form of caring and love for her family, especially if it is related to the welfare of her children. Everything she does, including things that are imposing her child's will and indirectly taking her child's rights. It is also for this that makes Mrs. Bennet is judged as a selfish figure by readers. Based on the responses above, it shows that what reader's reference to respond to something will shape their perception of new things. The thing that becomes the reference is the experience and socio-cultural background of the reader itself.

Each reader's experience and aesthetic distance are the main factors influencing their responses. This can be seen in the responses of every reader who tries to relate experiences, differences in times, and problems in the text. Readers respond to Mrs. Bennett with variety. Half of the readers expressed their



disapproval because of not giving children the opportunity to choose their life partner in the future. Three other readers agreed with this behavior because that it is a form of responsibility from the mother to her child. There are also readers who have a response that is based on a religious point of view, so that also provides a color response of its own. While the rest did not agree or disagree, because two opposing reasons were also included.

Each reader's experience, aesthetic distance, and socio-cultural background are the main factors for them to respond to the situation of Mrs. Bennet. This can be seen in the responses of each reader who tries to relate experiences, differences in times, the environment and the problems that exist in the text. Most readers respond that this is unjustified for various reasons. Several other responses said that these situations and behaviors are identical with women, because of the habit of women who like to talk and sometimes these conversations cause problems between fellow women or their environment, which in fact this response is also influenced by gender background by the readers themselves.

Reader Response to Mrs. Bennet as a Wife

Reader gave responses, which in general can be seen in three responses. The first response is to reject the behavior and situation of Mrs. Bennet. With several reasons that the husband is the head of the family who has the most control over his household, besides that Mrs. Bennet, who is more domineering, doesn't seem to consider the opinions of her husband or other family members. The second response is that does not make a problem with this, in the sense of not refusing nor agreeing. With reason to say as long as it's either husband or wife discussing everything to decide a matter, it doesn't matter who dominates. And the last response that openly agreed to the situation, citing the instinctive attitude of a mother who cares about family problems or her child and the character of her



husband who is a little relaxed in dealing with a problem. In responding to this, the reader's response is motivated by several relatively similar things, but a small number of readers are also influenced by a strong cultural background. Not only have those, readers also tried to make connections between their experiences, space and time, and the imagination in the text which ultimately makes the responses as described above.

Reader Response to Mrs. Bennet as a Mother

The situation from Mrs. Bennett has various responses, but in general it has a two-way response, such as agreeing or not. Some readers agree, while some other readers do not agree with Mrs. Bennet's behavior towards her children. Although readers have relatively the same responses, each of these re-sponses is also motivated by different experiences by each reader such as culture, age differences, and religion. The reader gave a response which in general there are two responses to accept and reject Mrs. Bennet's behavior. The reason for some readers who reject this behavior is due to a situation where a mother is too involved in everything related to her child such as privacy, the right to determine a life partner, and so on. Which is not justified, because every child has freedom for themselves, but what is done as a mother is also not something that can be blamed? Another reader who accepts this Mrs. Bennet situation, that is because instinctively a mother wants her child to have a good life, as long as it is done by not forcing or limiting the child. In responding to this, the reader tries to relate experience, space and time, and the imagination of the text which ultimately makes the responses as described above.

The reader gave responses which in general there were two responses; most of which refused and the rest did not mind it. The reason for the reader who doesn't mind this behavior is because then one child and another will be motivated and try to be better, which is seen as a good thing because it has a positive impact.



But most do not agree with this because basically everyone is different, even though identical twins differ in strengths or weaknesses. Some other reasons for disagreeing with this are also mothers who do not appreciate the superiority of their children, affect the mental state, and damage the children's brotherly relationship because they feel competitive with each other. Experiences in the form of culture and environment as well as the differences in the times of the readers in responding to Mrs. Bennet greatly influence their responses, which are also not the same between one another. Even though they have the same response, they are motivated by different reasons.

Reader gives a response which simultaneously says that when a child is married, then all parental re-sponsibilities for them have also ended. The only responsibility there is to guide or advise when the child is experiencing difficulties in marriage, both father and mother. Children have their own control over their marriage with their partner. Whatever problems they encounter, it is a shared responsibility, including if the marriage fails. But some parents will feel worried when their child's marriage fails. Be-cause then parents, especially mothers, will feel like they have failed because they have guided and educated their children.

In the reading process, there will be involvement between the structure of the literary work and the reader itself. So that the meaning of the discourse presented by the author will shift along with the in-terpretation of the reader. Why is that? This happens because interpreting the reader is also influenced by experience factors which include age, level of education, gender, socio-cultural background, the horizon of expectations, actions, and reading skills, as well as the time and place of reading. These fac-tors are systematized by Jauss into his seven theses which talk about experience, the horizon of expec-tation, aesthetic distance, contemporary spirit, historical sequences, diachronic-synchronic aspects, and



historical literary relations. According to these seven theses, which are factors in the reader's perception of a literary work. Four of them are the main influences for readers in response to a literary work.

Reader's Experience in Responding to Mrs. Bennet's Character

Discuss women and their relation to education and work. Readers describe women as gentle and affectionate in their actions. When women do not get a formal education and work in a public area, some readers say it is not a problem and others say it is a must for different reasons. The responses were acquired from the readers themselves who also have a dominant background based on their gen-der and religion.

Reader Response through Gender Background

Male readers define women by highlighting things related to their nature or treatment. This defini-tion was also stated by some female readers, but there are also differences between male and female readers regarding their responses to the question 'what do you think about a woman? Whether as mother or wife. If male readers define women based on their characteristics and sense, then in this study it found that female readers define women based on the values, responsibilities, and rights at-tached to women for these characteristics and behavior.

Female readers have relatively the same response to the behavior of the lady as a wife. Mrs. Bennet's behavior is told to think about the future and well-being of her daughters. Not seeing her husband al-so having the same problem as her, made her more agile in doing everything to overcome it than her husband who looked relaxed. So that every Mr. Bennet will take action, not infrequently his wife also takes part and even dominates it. For this behavior, female readers have no problem with Mrs. Bennet, who as a wife dominates her husband. Accompanied



by reasons that say everything must have a husband-wife discussion (reader1), a less assertive husband (reader6), a mother who understands the condition of her family the best (reader9), and while the husband does not forget his responsibilities (reader10). However, reader2 has a different view, saying that the husband is the head of the family and has the biggest share of the family, so it is not justified if the husband is more dominated by his wife.

Reader Response through Religious Background

Mrs. Bennet is described by readers as a fairly good character, although sometimes she is more concerned with her own opinion than others and behaves that is considered impolite. Mrs. Bennet has a desire that her five daughters can be proposed to by noble men or those who have middle and upper social class. For this reason, Mrs. Bennet did anything for her sake, including forcing one of her daughters to accept a proposal from a man her daughter did not want. Some readers disagree with Mrs. Bennet's behavior. Especially reader4 who says that Mrs. Bennet's behavior is something that is considered excessive, according to which everything that happens has been willed by God (in some beliefs). With Mrs. Bennet's behavior like that, it is considered to have preceded God's will, so readers4 show his disapproval of this.

Reader Response through Cultural Background

Based on the description of the reader's response to the woman and Mrs. Bennet (whether as a mother or wife), it can be concluded that in responding to each issue related to Mrs. Bennet, the reader's experience becomes the most influential thing. When responding to issues concerning women, the response that is dominated by a gender background is the main factor that makes each reader's response different. Likewise, when responding to other issues directly related to Mrs. Bennet. The various responses obtained are also influenced by the experience



of readers who judge from a different socio-cultural backgrounds such as religion and several cultural matters such as the environment and by the times.

Readers' Horizon of Expectation on the Character of Mrs. Bennet

Based on these responses, it can be seen that the reader has the horizon of expectations, which are also still motivated by different experiences. Issues related to women, education, work, and Mrs. Bennet (whether as mother or wife), the reader responded by bringing out a diverse response. The por-trayal of women by male readers merges the image of women who are more based on the sense of woman itself. But not all male readers give such responses; some other readers (whether female readers and the other male readers) have a horizon of Hope to respond to these issues. Moreover, re-garding issues related to women also Mrs. Bennet as a woman, some readers' responses are colored by a strong patriarchal background, such as responses that women must submit to men because men are leaders. But some other readers have a response that is in line with the ideas of modernism and even postmodernism, such as the response that patriarchy that puts women under men is an old idea, so with that woman is said to have a career, at least get educated formally as a form that men and women are equal to public intercourse other than their sex differences. Not only that, but the reader also said everyone (especially women) has the right to herself such as being free to argue, choose to work or not, and determine his life partner without interruption by other people's opinions.

Based on the description above, which leads to what Jauss said in his second thesis, about the horizon of expectations. Previously the reader has experienced several things. Then that experience is used as a standard to judge everything. In this process, the reader tries to involve his imagination to connect



the phenomena in the text with the facts in reality. This situation creates an interaction between the reader and the text itself.

The Aesthetic Distance of Readers and Related Issues

In responding to every phenomenon that surrounds Mrs. Bennett, the reader gives a response that spontaneously says no problem or objection to it. Because this indicates that the reader puts themselves in the face of the situation, which according to the reader is not a strange thing. This also shows that there is a small aesthetic distance between the reader and the literary work because the situation in Mrs. Bennet is not much different from what is happening around the reader.

Time and Place Dimension

The dimensions of time and the dimensions of the reader's place shape the color of the reader's re-sponse in responding to Mrs. Bennet's character. Especially in responding to the situation of Mrs. Bennet who disagrees with her children, the most dominant readers involve the situation in their time to re-pond to it. Several readers were also seen who tended in each process to provide responses trying to assess Mrs. Bennet's situation with the times of the readers.

This is per his fourth thesis, Jauss talks about the dimensions of time and the dimensions of place that determine the reader's reception. When there is no change in the horizon of expectation and the existing situation, the horizon of expectation and experience of the reader will still change or be different because it is influenced by the socio-cultural background of the reader. Jauss argues that literary works do not have immortal meanings for every reader, but will produce different meanings throughout the ages. So every literary work will have a



different and varied meaning or reception from one reader to another, from the work it was published to the entire time the work existed.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to reveal the reader's reception of one of the characters in the novel *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, through the Jauss literary reception approach. This study examines the response through how the intended reader responds to the character of Mrs. Bennet. The response given by the reader has a diversity that is influenced by the socio-cultural background of each reader. Gender, religion, culture, times, and environment are the dominant things that influence the reader's response in responding to the character of Mrs. Bennet. Mrs. Bennet herself was described as a middle-aged woman who lived in British in the late 18th century.

In this era, formal education and work in the public area for the woman is quite strange or almost not found. For this reason, the reader has a variety of responses, for some male readers when women do not get an education and work in the public area is not a problem, but female readers have the opposite response saying that it is an interest for women as a form of quality and independence for women itself. But some readers (whether or female readers) also say when women get a formal education and work in the public area or vice versa, it is not a problem with the reason there must be several factors that support it, and that everyone has the freedom to choose to have education and work or not.

As a wife who often dominates her husband, the reader responds to this, which includes a response that is motivated by religion and culture. Some readers say that as a wife, she should submit to her husband by thinking the husband is the head of the family and should play the biggest role and lead in a family. But some other readers also do not mind whether the husband or wife dominates in a family.

As a mother who often does not think about her children, the reader also has a variety of responses. The reader does not agree with Mrs. Bennet who was blessed with whom his daughter was hanging out, forced his child to get married not with his choice because the reader had a response that was influenced by the situation in certain times which said that everyone had rights or control over themselves. But some readers who are motivated by a particular culture, also said that the behavior of Mrs. Bennet was not a problem.



In Summary, the reader's response above shows how the reader's response to the character of Mrs. Bennet (who has been further discussed in the discussion section). The diverse responses from the readers above are colored by gender, religious, cultural, and environmental differences from the reader themselves to show the reader's response in a certain period of time (synchronous). This is in line with what is stated by Jauss about a series of readers' processes in responding to a literary work that experience, the horizon of expectation, reality, and time are things that affect the response of the read-er.

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