ARTIKEL

THE ASPECTS OF MARXISM IN SOLOMON NORTHUP'S
"TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE"

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THE ASPECTS OF MARXISM IN
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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the Marxism conception towards the aspect of Marxism. The data were taken from the sentences or text produced in Twelve Years A Slave novel of Solomon Northup in 1853 which has 199 pages. Particular attention is given to the concerning aspects of Marxism, as defined by Wood (2003). The focuses of the paper are to find out the aspects of Marxism in Twelve Years A Slave novel of Solomon Northup and also describe how Marxism are portrayed in the novel based on the aspects. The results of the study are stated as follows: The aspects of Marxism occurred are: Dialectical Materialism, Social Alienation, Exploitation of Class, and Economic Determinism. Then the aspects of Marxism found in the novel of Twelve Years a Slave by Solomon Northup are portrayed through the difficulties of exploited and unfair treatment of being lower class.

Keywords: Marxism, aspects of Marxism, exploitation, capitalism, materialism, social alienation, economic determinism, slavery.
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

It is interesting to know about historical event such as revolution or significant changes. Because the incapability of seeing directly what happened in that time, the story mostly known through reading a story or watch the historical channel on visual media. Along with the story, one theory that put attention of the history is Marxism.

Generally, literary works like novel contains many situations of life, which means as the illustration of the social life. One of them is slavery. Slavery is related to the political, social, and economic aspect of life. According to Andriyani and Aquarini in Ramadliyantie (2009:29) slavery in any forms is a disease. It makes sense when somebody has a disease; they have to do something to heal herself. Moreover, slavery becomes the interesting subject to find that black people are used for the property of white people.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (mid 19th century) stated that Marxism is the human actions and institutions which economically determined and that class struggle is needed to create historical change and that capitalism will ultimately be superseded by communism. From many forms of exploitation that happen in many historical events, the victim sometimes forced to obey the upper class that finally lead to misunderstandings and even conflict among the classes in the society. This is because some factors, such as they could not catch the demand of the upper class properly and sometimes the upper class has a specific purpose or to take advantage by hiding the truth.
Wood (2004) found there are concerning aspect of Marxism, they are: dialectical materialism, social alienation, exploitation of class, and economic determinism.

The reason why the writer chooses the aspect of Marxism is because the writer also finds the same situations in a novel titled “Twelve Years a Slave” by Solomon Northup in 1855 which raises the effort of a man towards slavery and endures the oppression of the upper class. The man is actually himself, was a free-born African American from New York, the son of a freed slave. With the explanation above, this novel caught the writer attention while the story showed conversations and occurrence that needed an understanding to get the meaning of the novel. The writer later did library research and read some Marxism books as the writer finally got a Marxism study concerning with the topic from particular books. This novel has many interesting conflicts between upper and lower class to analyze especially in the scope of Marxism concept. That’s why the writer is interested in finding out and learn more why the main character affect his life during the experience of being a slave seeing from the aspects of Marxism. The aspect of Marxism is the main point as the relationship between social class and the impact becomes the basis of writer's assumption in analysis. As in example in the novel below:

...they would give me one dollar for each day's services, and three dollars in addition for every night I played at their performances, besides sufficient to pay the expenses of my return from New-York to Saratoga. I at once accepted the tempting offer, both for the reward it promised, and from a desire to visit the metropolis. (p. 11)
The pride of man had been overcome by money and promise, as the consciousness of Northup had been taken by the desire of himself. The point of exchanging his life into one dollar each day’s services has brought his materialistic and forces himself to want more. The life of community is taken control by economic determinism, that’s why they do anything to make profit by any means.

According to the explanation above, it is needed to show how the economic ruin the mental and sanity of men. The consequences human withstand is inevitable to their heir. The responsibility is soaked into the history of white men because of exploiting and enslaving other human for the sake of gold.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Literature etymology is taken in the late of 14th century, from Latin literatura/litteratura "learning, writing, grammar," originally "writing formed with letters," from litera/littera "letter". Literature is writing in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays. Bertens (2001:13-15) states that:

*The literary text is neither a vehicle for ideas or a reflection of social reality, nor the incarnation of some transcendental truth. It is made of words, not of objects, feelings, and an expression of the author’s mind.*

A novel is a fictional piece of prose that is typically written in a narrative style and presented as a bound book. The word comes from the Italian, Novella, which means the new staff that small. The novel developed in England and America. The novel was originally developed in the region from other forms of
narrative nonfiction, such as letters, biographies, and history. But with a shift in society and development time, the novel is not only based on data nonfiction, author of novel can change according to the desired imagination.

Sumardjo in Setianingsih (1998: 29) said that:

*Novel is a story with the prose form in long shape, this long shape means the story including the complex plot, many character and various setting. Novels tell stories, which are usually defined as a series of events described in a sequence. The novel has been a part of human culture for over a thousand years, although its origins are somewhat debated. Regardless of how it began, the novel has risen to prominence and remained one of the most popular and treasured examples of human culture and writing. Its form and presentation tends to change with the times, but it remains an essential part of the literary cultures of nearly all societies around the world.*

So basicly novel is a story that portrayed through the writing of a text, the contains are in sequence and also has a certain plot and genre. It also have loosely defined and flexible genre. The genre is sometimes referred to using the slang term faction, a portmanteau of the words *fact* and *fiction*.

Marxism is a worldview and method of societal analysis that focuses on class relations and societal conflict, which uses a materialist interpretation of historical development, and a dialectical view of social transformation. Marxist methodology uses economic and sociopolitical inquiry and applies that to the analysis and critique of the development of capitalism and the role of class struggle in systemic economic change. Marxism is based on a materialist understanding of societal development, taking as its starting point the necessary economic activities required by human society to provide for its material needs.

So Marxism approaches the study of history in order to trace the natural laws which run through all human history, and for this purpose it looks not at individuals but at peoples, it finds that there are different sections of the people,
some pulling one way and some another, not as individuals, but as classes. Moreover, Emile Burns (1963) in “What Is Marxism?” stated that the history of mankind is usually presented in the form of a record of wars between nations and the exploits of individual monarchs, generals or statesmen. Sometimes the motives of these individuals are described in a purely personal way – their ambitions led them to conquer territory, or their moral or immoral outlook caused them to adopt certain policies. Sometimes they are described as acting for the sake of the country’s honor or prestige, or from some motive of religion.

Marxism itself is the concept of class struggle plays a central role in understanding society's allegedly inevitable development from bourgeois oppression under capitalism to a socialist and ultimately classless society. The aspect of Marxism is the central point to comprehend how the capitalist think and consider their property as a tool to gain more wealth, no matter the property is breathing or not. Wood (2004) found there are 4 major aspect of Marxism, they are dialectical materialism, social alienation, exploitation of class, and economic determinism.

1. Dialectical materialism is a philosophical approach to reality derived from the teachings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For Marx and Engels, materialism meant that the material world, perceptible to the senses, has objective reality independent of mind or spirit. They did not deny the reality of mental or spiritual processes but affirmed that ideas could arise, therefore, only as products and reflections of material conditions.
2. Alienation is a concept that refers to both a psychological condition found in individuals and to a social condition that underlies and promotes it. Karl Marx argued that alienation results from the private ownership of capital and the employment of workers for wages, and arrangement that gives workers little control over what they do. In alienated systems, people no longer work because they experience satisfaction or a sense of connection to the life process, but instead work to earn money, which they need in order to meet their needs. Alienated work becomes a routine, mechanical activity directed by others and serving merely as a means to an end.

3. Exploitation is defined as the act of using resources or the act of treating people unfairly in order to benefit from their efforts or labor. The upper class treats the proletarian as their private property. According to Wright in Immerfall and Therborn (2009), the key notions in class concept is social relations. By this term he means particular relations within production and not only market relations. Market relations describe locations regarding market capacity, and differences in this locations lead who occupy them. Relations within production cannot be restricted to technical diversities expressed. This means the relations within the productions involve different degrees of power relations and having control over productive resources. This leads to the variation of locations people occupy on grounds of how much rights and powers they have and this creates class relations that results to exploitation.

4. Economic determination is that everything in life is determined by capital this is a version of the ‘determinism’ which holds that all human actions
are causally determined by factors wholly outside the agent’s control – in Marx’s case, by ‘economic, factors. On this interpretation, Marx’s thesis is that people’s thoughts and actions, their political behavior as well as their moral, religious and philosophical convictions, are all causally determined by economic facts, while these actions and convictions themselves exercise no influence whatever on the economic situation.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS**

_Methodology_

This research used descriptive qualitative method to describe the aspect of Marxism in *Twelve Years A Slave* novel. A qualitative research is a research procedure, which produced a descriptive data, and it is focused on such as written or spoken words relates with people and manner that are able to observe (Moleong, 1989:3).

_Techniques of Analyzing the Data_

The data are collected in this research must be analyzed. The technique of data analysis was content analysis, which followed these steps:

1. Identify the statement that contain Marxism from novel
2. Quote the statement that relating to the aspects of Marxism.
3. Analyze the data, finding the relationship with the aspect of Marxism including the background towards Marxist theory.
4. Prove the data analysis with necessary explanation of Marxism concept.
5. Draw the conclusion
Findings

The analysis revealed that the aspects of Marxism existed in the *Twelve Years A Slave* novel by Solomon Northup. After analyzing all the texts, the findings of this study could be seen below:

1. There were four major aspects of Marxism found in the novel of *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup. Total 68 cases involving Marxism aspects. The total numbers of cases occurred are: Dialectical Materialism with 18 cases (26, 47 %), Social Alienation with 10 cases (14, 70 %), Exploitation of Class with 31 cases (45, 58 %), and Economic Determinism with 9 cases (13, 23 %).

2. Based on the analysis, the aspects of Marxism perspective in *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup is portrayed by showing the difficulties for being the lower class and the unfair treatment of exploitation by racism and also slavery has brought the dark shroud of humanity.

The dialectical materialism as the main pivot of capitalism are shown by the act of owning people in *Twelve Years a Slave* as private property for the sake of upper class prosperity and as a mere tool to gain more material value which is worst than cruel. Social alienation is shown by the estrangement of the property (black people, slaves) to achieve the pompous target of demand, to raise the proficiency through toiling the labor without complaint or even sound. It is forbidden to communicate while working. Only one thing is permitted to do, that is working. Next is exploitation of class, this issue is portrayed by the discrimination through slavery and racism. The severe
circumstances of lower class plus the grievous treatment of upper class (land owner, property owner, or the overseer) has brought nightmares for the black people. The upper class forces the black people to work without rest from dawn to dark, everything for their material profit. The economic determinism is portrayed by the capitalist who tries to control the economy ended to opposite, but still they oppressed other to gain more wealth. In that moment, the civilized community is not seeing this issue as a disorder, yet they are controlled by economy and materialistic mindset to live by sacrificing other human, in this case the black people, the poor slaves. The determinism of social economic status has led to a wall of stratification.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

After analyzing the data, conclusions could be drawn as the following:

1. There were four major aspects of Marxism found in the novel of Twelve Years a Slave by Solomon Northup. They were: (1) Dialectical Materialism with 18 cases (26, 47 %), which is an act for sacrificing other things to get more material value and considering the private property (living-human, cattle, etc- or not) as the main subject. (2) Social Alienation with 10 cases (14, 70 %), which is to make the private property solitude and think none other than work to raise the proficiency of labor. (3) Exploitation of Class with 31 cases (45, 58 %), which the act of extracting
the labor power and or abuse. (4) Economic Determinism with 9 cases (13, 23%), which is the urge of controlling the economy but lead to opposite.

2. The data findings showed the aspects of Marxism perspective in *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup is portrayed by showing the difficulties for being the lower class and the unfair treatment of exploitation by racism and also slavery has brought the dark shroud of humanity. The dialectical materialism as the main pivot of capitalism are shown by the act of owning people in *Twelve Years a Slave* as private property for the sake of upper class prosperity and as a mere tool to gain more material value which is worst than cruel. Social alienation is shown by the estrangement of the property (black people, slaves) to achieve the pompous target of demand, to raise the proficiency through toiling the labor without complaint or even sound. It is forbidden to communicate while working. Only one thing is permitted to do, that is working. Next is exploitation of class, this issue is portrayed by the discrimination through slavery and racism. The severe circumstances of lower class plus the grievous treatment of upper class (land owner, property owner, or the overseer) has brought nightmares for the black people. The upper class forces the black people to work without rest from dawn to dark, everything for their material profit. The economic determinism is portrayed by the capitalist who tries to control the economy ended to opposite, but still they oppressed other to gain more wealth. In that moment, the civilized community is not seeing this issue as a disorder, yet they are controlled by economy and materialistic mindset to
live by sacrificing other human, in this case the black people, the poor slaves. The determinism of social economic status has led to a wall of stratification. This condition is created because of the lack of pathos of the society.

**Suggestions**

In relation to the conclusions, the following suggestions are stage:

1. The literature teachers, it is better for them to understand not only the theory of Marxism but also the aspect within the Marxism as found in the novel *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup.

2. Applied Linguistic students, it is suggested to read more novels like *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup which give moral lesson from the journey of Solomon who tries to find the justice after he experienced slavery and to teach how to recover all of problems, to be patient and not giving up.

3. It is suggested for other researchers to make other research related this idea to give more horizon and enlarge the discourse on literary studies especially to the study of sociology of literature in using Marxist theory and also useful information in understanding Marxism acts. This thesis would be place as the main references in order to make further research about Marxism.
REFERENCES


