

The Tragic Worldview in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (Pandangan Dunia Tragis Dalam *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Karya Harriet Beecher Stowe)

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Abstract

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. This novel describes clearly the suffering of black people in America as a slave. There is a fugitive slave law that frees anyone to catch the runaway slave. That law makes many slaves be caught and punished. That condition does not make some slaves give up to fight for their independence. However, there are some slaves who do the opposite things. There are people who surrendered to the situation and blame their fate. There is also someone who has a tragic mind like what happen in Uncle Tom. He does not accept the situation of slavery, but he still stay to face it with his faith to the God. Uncle Tom believes that God will guide and save him. Even that hope never happen to him. Considering that phenomenon, this study applies the genetic structuralism theory which tries to find the worldview that appears in the novel. The result of this thesis shows that struggle of Uncle Tom's tragic views which expressed by Stowe's thought as a collective subject, and also the human fact and worldview that appears at that time. Slavery system made several slaves who does not believe in God existence finally give up and doing nothing for their future. While the other slaves who has a faith to God are have a strength to runaway and gain their independence.

Keywords: *Pandangan Dunia, Slavery, Genetic Structuralism, Lucien Goldmann, Fugitive Slave Law.*

Abstrak

Pondok Paman Tom adalah sebuah novel yang ditulis oleh Harriet Beecher Stowe. Novel ini menggambarkan dengan jelas penderitaan orang kulit hitam di Amerika sebagai seorang budak. Disana berlaku sebuah Hukum Budak Buron yang memperbolehkan setiap orang untuk menangkap budak yang melarikan diri. Undang-undang tersebut membuat banyak budak pelarian ditangkap dan dihukum. Tapi dengan adanya hukum tersebut tidaklah membuat jera para budak untuk melarikan diri dan memperjuangkan kemerdekaannya. Namun, ada beberapa budak yang yang memilih menyerah dengan keadaan dan mengutuki takdir mereka sebagai ras kulit hitam. Namun ada juga seseorang yang memiliki pikiran tragis seperti Paman Tom. Ia adalah seseorang yang membenci adanya perbudakan. Namu sayangnya ia tetap tinggal dan berharap Tuhan akan segera menyelamatkannya. Sayangnya harapan Paman Tom tersebut tidak pernah terjadi. Melihat fenomena di sana, penelitian ini mengupasnya menggunakan teori Strukturalisme Genetik yang mencoba menemukan pandangan dunia di dalam novel tersebut. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa adanya perjuangan dari pandangan tragis Paman Tom yang diungkapkan oleh subjek kolektifnya si penulis, serta melalui fakta-fakta kemanusiaan dan pandangan dunia yang muncul pada waktu itu. Sistem perbudakan membuat beberapa budak yang tidak percaya pada keberadaan Tuhan akhirnya menyerah dan tidak memperjuangkan apapun untuk kehidupan mereka. Sementara budak lain yang memiliki iman kepada Tuhan adalah mereka yang memiliki kekuatan untuk memutuskan untuk meraih kemerdekaan.

Kata kunci: *Pandangan Dunia, Perbudakan, Strukturalisme Genetik, Lucien Goldmann, Hukum Budak Pelarian.*

Introduction

Uncle Tom's Cabin is a novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. This novel describes clearly the suffering of black people in America as a slave. Starting from the story of Uncle Tom, who lives with his wife and three children in a plantation which belongs to Mr. Shelby in Kentucky. Mr. Shelby's family is a picture of a white man who civilized in treating their slaves. They provide proper shelter, food, and good treatment. Mrs. Shelby is also a picture of a loving mother. She never distinguishes her family and her slaves. In fact she already regards her servants as part of the family. With religious values, Mrs. Shelby even wed one of his slaves named Eliza in her home. She promised to liberate her slaves in the future.

But one day, there was a commotion in their peaceful home. Mr. Shelby makes decisions which are entirely illogical for his wife and son. He has agreed with a slave trader to sell Uncle Tom and Harry, son of Eliza who still four years old. Mr. Shelby has no other choice but to sell them both to pay the debt. In those countries, slave is like property that can be bought and sold, and it is legal. Uncle Tom and Harry had become the property of the slaver trader, Mr. Haley.

Eliza knew about the trading. She planned to run away with her child. The same night, she packed up her clothes and immediately tells Uncle Tom and his family about Mr. Shelby's plan. The news became lightning strikes Uncle Tom's cabin which peaceful, likewise the hearts of his family. In contrast to the decision of Eliza, Uncle Tom decided not to flee. He is a calm figure and have a strong faith. He believes that God has a plan behind this tragedy. He also believes that Mr. Shelby's decision is the best one, rather than he sells the entire slaves. Uncle Tom thought, they would be safe in the Shelby's family.

But Eliza did not want to be separated with her son. She decided to run down the dark forest, to meet the strangers, across the river ice in Ohio by holding her child to Canada. Moreover, her husband had previously escaped from his master because he was treated inhumane. They hope to gain independence in Canada, as a free man. But the journey to achieve freedom is not easy. Eliza and her husband were overshadowed by the fugitive slave law, which requires anyone to hunt fugitive slaves. But it does not discourage the determination of Eliza in keeping her son.

Harriet Beecher Stowe describes all the injustice that occurs in the black race. Harsh treatment physically and spiritually, as if they were inanimate objects, not human. Not only that, Harriet also illustrates the empathy of the white race who does not agree with the system of slavery.

Research Methodology

The type of research conducted is library research. Library research is a research conducted to gather the information related to the topic of this thesis. The information gathered by reading the written material from the library and internet. The data are from the relevant topic of this thesis. It could be taken from books and articles in internet. The primary source of the data is the novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The secondary sources are textbooks and articles related to the Genetic Structuralism and historical background of America.

Data processing is to sort the data based on the type of data. In this method, the research chooses and finds out the information which is needed for the analysis to answer the problems to discuss. In processing the data, it is divided into some categories to begin the research. Firstly, it finds out the topic from the novel. Slavery that was depicted in the novel tells mostly about the problems of black people in their life. Secondly, genetic structuralism is a theory which analyzes the structure that constructs the worldview. According to Cohen who argued in *The Wager of Lucien Goldman*, that the subject of historical and cultural creation is plurality of individuals with common structures of consciousness (1994:140).

To analyze The Tragic Worldview in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Faruk in *Pengantar Sosiologi Sastra* states that;

"This study using the dialectic method, that harmonizes the part and overall to form a structure with maximum coherence, especially patterned structure of binary opposition (Faruk, 2012:169)."

In the other words, dialectical method establishes the absence of an absolute starting point. Each individual fact or ideas have meaning only if it is placed in its entirety.

Result

I found the worldview which is tragic In Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I do analyze the *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* structure which shows the binary opposition upon slavery. There are two oppositions in each races, slavery among Whites and Blacks which shows the binary opposition among them. So I can divide them to analyze every human facts which occurs. Secondly, the deep analyzing try to find the Tragic Worldview that exist in the novel is about tragic mind which is in Uncle Tom's character. The last my research is about the construction of American slavery in nineteenth century which is the real human facts which construct the worldview itself.

Discussion

Genetic structuralism is a combination of structuralism and Marxism. It means that genetic structuralism acknowledges the existence of a literary work as a structure. To find such structures, genetic structuralism use binary opposition as the basic concept.

In the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the opposition comes from the Northern who againsts slavery and the Southern that legalizes slavery. But, by the two oppositions among whites in the North and the South, there is also other opposition that occurred. That is the opposition between blacks who accept as slaves and those who want to be free.

Slavery Supporters among Whites. Slavery becomes proper things for most whites, especially for people in the South. They assume that blacks are a group of people who is destined to serve whites. This is reinforced by the dogma of priests that the black race is there to serve the whites. Another reason is the creation of social class as a result of the domination by the whites over the control of economic resources, for the cotton cultivation in large quantities. Thus, blacks becomes as slaves that work in farms belonging to whites. Because of this, the slaves became like the commodity. They traded and treated harshly like inanimate objects.

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin* there are a lot of characters of whites who support slavery system. They are the slave traders, the priests, or the owners of the farms. However I will review some figures that play an important role in the story. Arthur Shelby, Marie St. Clare, Simon Legree.

The Slavery Opponents Among Whites. In South, slavery had become a very reasonable thing in their daily lives. Actually not all white people in the South agreed with it. There are some characters from slaves owners who did not agree with the system of slavery in their country. In addition to the social evil curse, the actions they had shown in defending the slaves are also very dominant. I will review some figures that played important roles in the story. Emily Shelby, George Shelby, Senator Bird.

Blacks Who Accept The System. The slavery system experienced by black people is not a pleasant thing for

them. Physical or psychological abuses done by white people made slaves more miserable. Most of them did not fight because they felt inferior and accept their God's will to always obey their master.

In the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* there are characters who accept their nature as a slave. It even became commonplace for themselves because they thought that their destiny is to serve white people until the end of their life and hereditary. However, I will review some of the influential figures in the story who accept their belief in God's will as something natural. Topsy, Sambo and Quimbo

Blacks Who Rebelled The System

As a man who longed for freedom, there are some characters who did the resistance in the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. They are black slaves who tried defending their belief to get right as a human being; a right to live freely and equally. The number of those who fought to against slavery is not much: George Harris, Eliza Harris, Cassy.

From the research above, it is clearly seen that the depiction of binary oppositions appears between each whites and blacks. There are also human facts and collective subjects which are depicted in the story. In this point, we'll move to find the worldview which is represented by the main character from the story, Uncle Tom's worldview which has a tragic mind.

According to Goldmann (1977: 62), tragic worldview contains of three elements: view of God, view of the world, and view of man, which relate to each other. Tragic worldview is a viewpoint about the world that is parallel to the view of divinity. Goldmann also states;

"Tragic worldview seeing the world as it all at once instead of nothing. All that God prosecuted may not be seen from the perspective of the world. On the contrary, everything that may legally be nothing mundane and insignificant in the presence of the God "when the eye of God lights upon us" (1988: 40)."

Uncle Tom is a person who has a strong character in the story. He is a black slave who lives peacefully for many years when he is possessed by Mr. Shelby. There he has pretty good luck than other slaves. He is treated very humanely by Mr. Shelby and his family. Uncle Tom is given a house and proper clothing. Uncle Tom and his wife, Aunt Chloe, have a happy life with their children. Uncle Tom learns to read and write to the better understanding of his religion. During the learning process, he is taught by Master George, Mr. Shelby's son. Uncle Tom becomes more religious to understand the Bible. With a calm figure, his strong faith in religion makes him homely. He has a good influence for anyone in that house. Until one day he knows the worst reality that Mr. Shelby has to sell him in order to cover the debt.

Uncle Tom eventually sold to the South. In the abroad journey in the steam which splits the Mississippi river, he gets the sympathy from everyone there. It happens because Uncle Tom always helps anyone sincerely as when he works at Kentucky's plantation.

However, Uncle Tom is an ordinary person who also feels anxiety when he has to separate away with his family. Although in the new place, he has the sympathy from people, Uncle Tom misses his family and every inch of his cabin in the Mr. Shelby's plantation. Uncle Tom tries to read the Bible when he remembers of his past. That's the only thing that can calm him down.

The condition above proves that Uncle Tom is a figure of human tragic because he will remain alone in the midst of human beings who have been pessimistic about the presence of God. According to Goldman (1977: 82), the relationship between human tragic with other has characteristic which is dual and paradoxical. On the one side, he hopes to save them, takes them together, and raises them to the same level. On the other hand he realizes of the gap that separates it from them and is forced to accept it.

After knowing the binary opposition in the work of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and also analyzes the worldview in it, further analysis is to determine the social structure in American society at that time, until the work was created.

According to Goldman, a work be grasped in terms of a worldview and the mental structures of social groups, and not by means of the author's biography. In 1952, Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because her exasperation of the fugitive slave law, a law that frees

anyone to hunt runaway slaves. It was happen because many slaves who want to escape from the slavery system to gain the independence.

Slavery arose because of economic growth which growing rapidly in America in nineteenth century. One of the growths was in the agricultural sectoring that growing in the South. Cotton became the most important crop and characterizes the South. In 1850, South of America has produced more than eighty percent of the world's cotton. They used slaves to cultivate all crops.

Due to those commodities, slavery became a necessity for Southern. They even expanded the slavery areas into the West (Mississippi area) for the benefit of the cotton's cultivation. That requirement was born because of lands which damage by the processing of one plant only. The expansion was also to balance the states that oppose the existence of slavery, the North. Until in the 1830s, conflict between North and South states was become pointed.

Anti-slavery movement which re-emerged in the early 1830s was known to be very persistent. William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglas are two figures abolitionist activists who never want to compromise with the laws of the countries which adherents' slavery. One of the abolitionist struggles was helping runaway slaves to strives the safe refuge in the North or passes the frontier into Canada.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Through this thesis, Uncle Tom is a human tragic figure because he will remain alone in the midst of human beings who have been pessimistic about the presence of God. He is destined not to be understood by the men who always 'sleep' and expose their wrath of God which is hidden and not present. Uncle Tom's case is explained through the analysis of Genetic Structuralism to proof that God in the tragic worldview at once does and doesn't exist. In conclusion, this thesis sees a struggle of tragic mind of Uncle Tom which expressed by his collective subject, human fact and worldview at that time.

Slavery system made several slaves who does not believe in God existence finally give up and doing nothing for their future. While the other slaves who has a faith to God are have a strength to decide what the best things for their life to gain the independence. Moreover, Stowe offers the options to the reader to concern about the problem of

slavery that occurs in their country at that time. Upon the changing concepts of natural's acceptance, which blacks are second-class by a belief in the Bible, into the concept of humanity which should be equal. That black people should be free and also always belief that Bible is regarding for human affection.

Conclusively, I hope this research is useful for others as the reference of their study in Genetic Structuralism field which captures the worldview from social facts in this world into a literary work.

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