

A MARXIAN ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL CLASS IN STEPHENIE MEYER'S *THE HOST*

(Analisis Marxis tentang Kelas Sosial dalam *The Host* Karya Stephenie Meyer)

Tri Asih Handayani, Ikwan Setiawan, Imam Basuki
English Department, Faculty of Letters, Jember University
Jln. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121
e-mail: tri.mousedeer@gmail.com

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas novel berjudul *The Host* karya Stephenie Meyer menggunakan teori yang dikemukakan oleh Terry Eagleton, khususnya penjelasan tentang ideologi dari kelas dominan yang terefleksikan dalam karya sastra. Data utama yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah beberapa deskripsi naratif serta dialog dalam cerita *The Host* yang berhubungan dengan rumusan masalah dalam kajian ini. Data-data ini dianalisis dari hal-hal spesifiknya untuk mendapatkan kesimpulan umum. Sementara itu, dalam kajian ini juga menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi sastra untuk menguatkan pendapat dari penulis. Dengan menghubungkan tokoh-tokoh utama dalam cerita *The Host* dan ciri-ciri masyarakat kapitalis dalam teori Marxis, kelompok manusia dapat digambarkan sebagai kaum kelas bawah sedangkan kelompok alien sebagai kaum kelas atas. Kehidupan alien digambarkan baik dalam segala hal sedangkan manusia sebaliknya. Secara tidak langsung, kelas atas memasukkan kepentingannya sebagai kelas dominan untuk mempertahankan kekuasaan serta meredam perlawanan kelas. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa posisi ideologi dari penulis ada di pihak kaum kelas atas. Melalui ideologi yang dipercaya oleh masyarakat, penulis memasukkan wacana dalam karyanya bahwa kehidupan kaum kelas atas dipihak yang selalu berkedudukan lebih tinggi dari kelas yang lain.

Kata kunci : kelas sosial, kelas dominan, ideology, marxisme, sosiologi sastra.

Abstract

This study analyzes Stephenie Meyer's novel entitled *The Host* by using Marxist theory which is proposed by Terry Eagleton particularly about the ideology of dominant class as the ruling class which is reflected in literary work. The primary data of this study are any narrative descriptions and dialogues in *The Host* that are related to the research questions. They are analyzed from the specific cases to general conclusion. Meanwhile, this study also uses the sociological approach to strengthen the idea of the researcher. By relating characters in *The Host* with the characters of capitalist society, the result of this study shows that the humans are as proletariat and the aliens are as the bourgeoisie. The life of aliens is described in good way while humans' life is not. Indirectly, it shows the interest of high class to defend their wealth and decrease the conflict of class struggle. It explains that ideological position of the author is in high class side. The discourse about the authority of the high class which is above the other class is described through *The Host* story.

Key words : social class, dominant class, ideology, marxism, sociology of literature

Introduction

The Host tells about the invasion of aliens to the Earth and shift the humans as the owner of the Earth by inserting the soul of an alien to the human body. The aliens claim that Earth becomes more beautiful and peace after their invasion. While humans are suffering. Some of the humans run away and live in hidden places. Then they make a seditious community. Some of the human souls who still exist in their body try to refuse the alien souls by poisoning them with feelings that aliens do not have. Wanderer is the name of alien soul who lives in human body of Melanie. She tries to take the information by using Melanie's memories to lead the Seeker, an alien that works for finding another humans. The rest of humans hide in the desert include the brother and boyfriend of Melanie. They are looked for by the seeker. But Melanie tricks Wanderer by the memories that lead them both to human community in a hidden cave. Then Wanderer joins the community even she is not the part of the community. She gets different treatment by the members and the leader of the community. That are good and bad treatment.

Relating to Marxism, the life of human and alien can be considered as social class. Based on the ownership of the system production in capitalist society, the social class is divided into high (bourgeois) and lower class (proletariat). Bourgeoisie are the owner of the system production. The aliens community is as metaphor of the high class. Aliens govern, dominate and get all access of the world. They do exploitation and make the world be better. On the other hand, the proletariat is supposed as poor of education, poor of beauty and poor of behavior that has close relation with criminality, inhumanity, and violence. So, by relating the story with Marxism, the description of human community in this case is the representation of proletariat or working class who gets limited access in the world, even his body. The body of human is inserted by alien soul, it is just like a laborer who is arranged by system of high class. The working class means the servant of the bourgeoisie by selling their labour power.

Marx divides the economic structure into two. They are the superstructure and the base or infrastructure. The superstructure is the ideology that is caused by social economic structure of the society. The superstructure is the whole social, political system, education, ideology and the other system of the class (Williams, 1977:75). The ideology means false consciousness. It appears in the form of feeling, value or perception of the social dominance. The people are made to believe with something that seems

natural but there is another thing behind it. The high class are the dominant group because they are the owner of the system production. They try to negotiate their existence to the lower class by using natural way such as the representation of social class in *The Host*.

According to Marx, the literary work is a part of social institution which has the same level with politics, religion, science and education. Using Marxist point of view, this research analyzes the ideology of bourgeoisie as the dominant class in social condition through Stephenie Meyer's *The Host*. It traces how the dominant class try to spread their ideology in society without force. Thus, this research is determined to have A Marxian Analysis of Social Class in Stephenie Meyer's *The Host*.

Research Methodology

The type of research is qualitative which focuses on collecting data and analyzing information. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible example which are seem as being interesting or illuminating (Blaxter et al 2006:64). This kind of research gives several advantages in making conceptual analysis, clear interpretation, and appropriate perspectives.

All the data which are taken from those materials are in the form of sentences or words in several books, articles and many materials from internet which are relevant with the problems discussed. Data collection of this research are some statements, narrations and words refer to the particular topic in the novel titled *The Host* as the source data. While three previous researches and some books which relate to Marxist criticism, social class and topic of the research to strengthen the idea of the researcher. The advantages of using this methods are the researcher collects theory by the experts and develop the object of observation more easily.

In processing data, the researcher follows the following steps: first is reading the novel titled *The Host*. It is important to read the story to get the understanding of the interest and finding the problem. Then, taking the sentences from the source data. It is used to take some important quotes relate to the topic. Next, Analyzing and relating the statement of primary data with the Marxism. It is interesting to make classification, verification and discussion of materials relate to problem. Finally, drawing the conclusion. It is important for the compact and easier understanding about the research.

Result and Discussion

The Host is a science fiction which is categorized as dystopian story. As stated in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* by Hornby, dystopian tells about an imaginary place or state in which everything is extremely bad or unpleasant (2010: 456). This novel tells about the life when the Earth is colonized by aliens. Some of humans follow and give their body and world to the aliens but some of them prefer suffering as a human rather to living life as an alien. So there are two kinds of community in the earth, they are alien community and human community. Then, these two communities are described in contrast ways. The aliens are better. They are as hero who save the Earth. While humans are worst. They are as vandal who destroy Earth.

Marx divides classes based on the mode of production which one class controls the production system (the bourgeoisie) and the other class as the servant of the owner of system of production. By relating the story with Marxism, the two communities can be categorized as the representation of social classes, bourgeois and proletariat, that always have conflict. The alien community is the high class or bourgeoisie. Then the human community is lower class or proletariat. The aliens' life is described in good way. So, indirectly, that representation tells that the bourgeoisie are better than proletariat in doing anything in the world.

In some cases, there are some differences of these classes. By comparing the two characters, it will show the parable. The alien and human can be represented by two main characters. They are Wanderer, the alien soul, and Melanie, the human. Aliens live in good place where is taken from human. All they need is filled. Instead human live in a cave with anything which is limited. They get their own world in limits. It shows how the proletariat is forced by capitalist. All of the differences above are the delineation how the novel describes the life of bourgeoisie and proletariat by the character. The aliens are more dominant in many things such as free for food, high education, living in peace and staying at an apartment. They live in fully for everything. They also claim that the Earth becomes more beauty and peace under their authority. Explicitly, the domination of alien is bourgeoisie caused by the organization of economy. Human is suffering in their own world. They can not live it up normally. Everything is in limited. Their life is never be better under the alien. They are hungry, stealing food, no access for information, uneducated, full of violence, and living in a cave. The aliens said that humans are arrogant and

damage for the Earth. As the proletariat who is always under the economic superiority, they wish their wages to be as high as possible but the capitalist wish for their wages as low as possible. In the capitalist society, the high class as the owners of the main production, always try to preserve and increase their wealth. While the lower class is weaker than the high class because the portion of them is smaller in the social competition. The dividing of classes, bourgeoisie and the proletariat, is the character of capitalist society.

The exploitation of the proletariat by bourgeois and the class struggle are another main points about these two classes. Bourgeois are the explorer. They are the owner of the means of production. The alien existence is only when they live in human body. They hunt all human for all their soul. It is needed to make their kind still continue.

"The scans were perfect," the Seeker said.

Her words not reassuring but argumentative. Did she mean to quarrel with me? "The body was entirely healed."

"From a suicide attempt that was perilously close to succeeding." My tone was stiff, still angry. I wasn't used to anger. It was hard to contain it.

"Everything was in perfect order —"

The Healer cut her off. "What is missing?" he asked. "Clearly, you've accessed speech."

"Memory. I was trying to find what the Seeker wants." (Meyer, 2010:26)

Aliens explore the humans by inserting the human body and searching for information to take the Earth. The investigation of Melanie's memory by Wanderer is like the workers who are pressed to work. The working class do not own any means of production. Then they are forced to sell their labour power. In capitalist system, the working class and the bourgeoisie are needed each others. The working class needs the job from the Bourgeoisie. While the bourgeoisie need the working class to carry out their business. But the condition is not equitable when the capitalist using machine to replace the labour power. It shows that the working class are weaker than the capitalist. This relationship can be called as the exploitation. The exploitation of this story is when Wanderer tries to dig the information from Melanie's memory. By this memory, the Seeker will be led to find another human resistant.

Class struggle is a part of social class effect. The basic thought Marx through *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is that economic production, and the structure of society of every historical epoch are a history of class struggles. The struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes. It has reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the Proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the Bourgeoisie) (Marx & Engels, 1848:6). The representation of this struggle is the effort of Melanie to get her access of her body. Her access to her own body is limited because her body is dominated by Wanderer. Not only by poisoning Wanderer by the memory of human life but also she tries to take her right back. As the basic contradiction in capitalism, the struggle raises when the contradiction is too far. The proletariat tries to get freedom from the pressure of high class. Melanie as the resistance host always strives against the pressure of Wanderer. Not all the humans give their body to the alien defencelessly. Some of them try to fight as they can include Melanie. As the owner of the body, she tries to get her body back. It makes Wanderer can feel the existence of Melanie.

"I could feel Melanie in each cell of my body. My nerve endings tingled in recognition of her familiar presence. My muscles twitched in anticipation of her direction. My lips trembled, trying to open. I leaned forward toward the boy in the hall, my body reaching because my arms would not.

Melanie had learned many things the few times I'd ceded or lost my command to her, and I truly had to struggle against her—so hard that fresh sweat beaded on my brow. But I was not dying in the desert now. Nor was I weak and dizzy and taken off guard by the appearance of someone I'd given up for lost;

I'd known this moment might come. My body was resilient, quick to heal—I was strong again. The strength of my body gave strength to my control, to my determination.

I drove her from my limbs, chased her from every hold she'd found, thrust her back into the recesses of my mind, and chained her there." (Meyer, 2010:217)

The effort of Melanie to get what belongs to her is as the representation. Her effort to defend her right of world and body is like the worker class who strives

against capitalist in economical matters. The basic of these two classes are always contradiction. The contradiction between the working class and the capitalist is not caused by the jealous or the egoistic of they both. It is because these two classes have different interest. If this condition is not changed, the working class will do struggle. So, the struggle in capitalist society and the changing of social system only can be done by revolution.

The literature is a place of ideas that needs to be communicated and shared to all of the people. Then it becomes as a tool of dominant class the society to control the society. Marx argued that the ideology is the false consciousness. It appears in the form of feeling, value or perception of the social dominance. The domination in social is not held by individual but the group or social classes. The people is led to believe with something that seems natural but there is another thing behind. The high class are the dominant because they are the owner of the system production. They try to negotiate their existence to the lower class by using natural way such as the representation in the story.

As mention before that the aliens and the humans have a lot differentiation. So when Wanderer is trapped in human community, she will become the others. Because of it, the humans treat her badly. But not all of humans do that. One of them is Jeb. He is Melanie's uncle who is also the leader of the human community. Under the control of Jeb as the leader of the community, Wanderer is treated specially. At the end, little by little the humans accepted and treated her as the part of the community. It is because Wanderer acts so kind. She makes the humans think that she is not same with the other aliens. The representation of Wanderer as the kind alien succeeds to make the members of human community accept her. Even she takes the life of human but she is forgiven and becomes the part of the community. This acceptance shows how the high class make the others classes have respect to them. It shows that they always become the upper than the others classes. As Marxism stated that the high class will try to save their wealth by spreading the discourse about their kindness. The purpose is to make people believe and agree with their ideas.

After Wanderer is accepted by all the member of the human community, she tried to be together with human like helping the human working. With the new life and friends in human community make Wanderer wants to live together one day. She is described in good behave when she is in human community. The condition of Wanderer can be called as the Socialistic

Bourgeois. They want all the advantages of modern social conditions without the struggles. The aim of this bourgeoisie is that in capitalist society also can be benefit for the working class. They wish for a bourgeois without a proletariat (Marx & Engels, 1848:31). The high class want to shows that their existence in human community is in peace. The story explains the main character as the delineation of high class who wants to be the part of the lower class community.

"Because you do belong here, oddly enough, Melanie whispered. She was very aware of the warmth of Ian's and Jamie's hands, wrapped around and twined with mine. Where else have you ever had this? Nowhere, I confessed, feeling only more depressed. But it doesn't make me belong. Not the way you do.

We're a package deal, Wanderer.

As if I needed reminding....

"(Meyer, 2010:416)

At the end of the plot of the story, Wanderer lives with human. Then she finds the others alien who was also with human. So there were many aliens that live together with human. As Marxism said that the capitalism makes the people become individual. It is not in line with the character of human as the social creature. At the end, it shows the hope of the high class that these two classes can live together with other class. According to Marxism, the society without classes can be seen when there is no the differentiation in social class. The authority of the dominant class does not oppress the people in society.

The way of describing the treatment of human and alien are not balance. Implicitly, it shows how the author's perspective to the high class and the lower class. It seems that the author on the high class side. The author position as the high class takes apart on her work. What the author consciously intends to say emphasizes the flaws, stresses, and incoherence in her ideology. But it does not mean that all of the author has the aim of propaganda because it depends on the readers. As the author, she tries to show and gives her idea in her mind through her work. Her knowledge and experience in super power and capitalist country, and her position as the high class through the story seems to lead and show the current ideology. Ideology itself refers to the way of individual or community thinking. In the last of the story, Meyer shows that the life of alien is accepted by all the humans. Human do not want lose the aliens. It is not like the first explanation that humans and aliens are enemies. It seems that they need aliens than humans themselves. It shows that the bourgeoisie are always needed and more important

than proletariat. As the explanation before, it is the ideology of the high class. Based on the sociological approach of the writer, *The Host* contains the interest of high class. The description of Wanderer and her life show that it makes the readers agree about the domination of high class in society. The author is the story maker. She shows her ideas which can be reached by the readers. The readers are led to believe that the high class are always kind to all people and the ideal one in society.

Terry Eagleton talks about the discourse of high class in literary works. In the form of literary discourse, the interest of bourgeois is inserted. The aim is to make the position of bourgeois always be on top. By showing the alien character as the nice one while human as terrible, the author tries to describe that the high class is better than lower class. So the ideological position of the author in *The Host* is about the high class interest. In the concept of ideology, all of different ideas about economy, history and society show the perspective that is connected with the class position of the author. As the part of high class, she described that the dominant class is always be the higher than the other classes. She makes it seems that there is no differentiation of class since the high and lower class are together. Actually it just wants to decrease the struggle of the lower class. As the story maker, the author express what she wants to say in the story. It includes her ideology that she believes.

Conclusion

After analyzing *The Host*, it is found two main characters who are extremely different. They are Wanderer and Melanie who both are different species. Wanderer is an alien while Melanie is a human. Aliens live in good way and hold many sectors in the Earth. Instead humans live with anything which is limited in their own body and world. In the story, the body is a human but the soul is the soul of alien. Eventhough in one body but the alien dominates more in using the body than human. It is such as the bourgeoisie explore the labour power of working class for their own interest. It shows that the working class is weaker than the capitalist. Then the condition of human who are suffering in the dessert is as the condition of proletariat which is very bad because they are forced to do work. The effort of Melanie to get what belongs to her is as the representation of class struggle. Her effort to defend her right of body and world is like the worker class who strives against capitalist in economic matters. In the capitalist society, the high class as the owners of the main production, always try to preserve and increase their wealth.

According to Marx, ideology is the superstructure while the social economy system is the base or

infrastructure. It develops together with the development of social condition in society. The ideology also means false consciousness. It appears in the form of feeling, value or perception of the social dominance. The people is made to believe with something that seems natural but there is another thing behind it. The high class try to negotiate their existence to the lower class by using natural way such as the representation in *The Host*. By relating with the plot of this story, it describes that the aliens get special treatment. The high and lower class can live together to decrease their conflicts which includes the problem of class struggle. It is as the function of ideology that can legitimate the authority of the dominant in society. At the end, it shows the hopes of the high class that they can live together with other class. The togetherness of the aliens and humans is described that it will benefit for both side. It is such the function of the ideology that seems for the public interest, but actually it is for the dominant class. So, everything that is described in good way by the dominant class must be suspected.

To find the ideology behind of *The Host* story, can be found in perspective of the author about her society. Based on the sociological approach of the writer, *The Host* contains the interest of the high class. The sociology of the author includes base economy and the ideology of the author. Author's knowledge and experience in capitalist country and her position as the high class influence her work. Terry Eagleton talks about the discourse of high class in literary works. In the form of literary discourse, the interest of bourgeois is inserted. The aim is to make the position of bourgeois always be on top. The author describes that the high position is always be higher than the other class. Even it seems like there is no differentiation and classes in capitalist society but it is just the idea to decrease the class struggle. The life of aliens are described as the ideal one. They get all they need. Their life is shuttled down. On the other hand the humans are suffering. It is such the hegemony that the life style of the alien or the high class is as the ideal one. The hegemony itself means the life values of the dominant class which is spreaded to society. Accidently it is became the agreement and forcefullness in society. The aim of the this Marxism is to make the country without classes, capitalism is replaced by socialism. It also defies the hegemony of the elite which is not on the proletariat side.

Bibliography

- A S Hornby. 2010. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Blaxter, L. et.al 2006. *How to Research*. Philadelphia: Open University

- Eagleton, Terry. 2006. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London: Taylor & Francis e-Library
- Marx, K and F.Engels. 1848. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Soch . 2nd ed. Vol. 4,p446
- Meyer, Stephenie. 2010. *The Host*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxist and Literature*. Oxford University Press