

A Deconstruction Analysis on the Character of Mr. Pangloss in Voltaire's Candide

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berkaitan dengan representasi kelas sosial borjuis dan proletariat dalam novel *The Outsiders* karya S.E. Hinton. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan Socs dan Greasers. Penelitian ini menggunakan karakterisasi; langsung dan tidak langsung untuk menemukan representasi karakteristik kelas sosial borjuis dan proletariat. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data dalam penelitian ini berupa kutipan, narasi, kata, frasa, klausa, kalimat, atau paragraf yang berkaitan dengan karakteristik kelas sosial borjuis dan proletariat yang diperoleh dengan membaca novel. Dalam analisisnya, peneliti menggunakan teori Marxis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Socs mewakili borjuis dan Greasers mewakili proletariat. Socs mempunyai lima karakteristik kelas sosial borjuis; kepemilikan modal, penguasaan alat produksi, kekayaan, pendidikan, dan berbudaya. Sementara Greasers mempunyai lima karakteristik kelas sosial proletariat; kelas pekerja, berpendapatan rendah, tereksplotasi, rendahnya pendidikan, dan rasa solidaritas. Peneliti menemukan bahwa Socs sebagai borjuis dan Greasers sebagai proletariat.

Kata kunci: borjuis, proletariat, *The Outsiders*

ABSTRACT

This research is concerned with the representation of bourgeoisie and proletariat social class in *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton novel. This research aimed to describe the Socs and the Greasers. This research used a characterization; direct and indirect to find representation of bourgeoisie and proletariat social class characteristic. This research used a qualitative research design with a descriptive method. The data in this research were quotations, narrations, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or paragraphs that are related to bourgeoisie and proletariat social class characteristic and obtained by reading the novel. In the analysis, the researcher used Marxist theory. The result showed that the Socs represent the bourgeoisie and the Greasers represent the proletariat. The Socs has five bourgeoisie social class characteristic; ownership of capital, control of the means of production, wealth, education, and culture. While the Greasers has five proletariat social class characteristic; working class, low income, exploited, lack of education, and sense of solidarity. The researcher found that the Socs as bourgeoisie and the greasers as proletariat.

Keywords: bourgeoisie, proletariat, *The Outsiders*

A. INTRODUCTION

Modern critical movements have aimed to correct what are seen as historical injustices in the field of literature. These movements have stressed the role played by gender, race, and class in establishing what has been considered literature in various eras. They have also challenged the notion of a timeless canon of great literature, arguing that such a canon is often based on the

values of a particular group or culture. Literary works are also impacted by social class. Literary works would never exist without social class in them. It reflects the social class in a society. Literary works become a reflection of the time in history and are closely related to concerns of social class.

Marxist critics analyze literary works about the economic and social conditions of the time they were produced. This approach views literature as a product of the class struggle and seeks to uncover the ideological assumptions and values that underlie literary texts. Marxist critics focus on how literary works reflect and reinforce the dominant ideology of the ruling class, and how they may be used to challenge or subvert that ideology. Marxist literary criticism interested in exploring how literature can be used to promote social change by exposing the contradictions and injustices of the capitalist system. Marxism divided the social class into two, bourgeoisie and proletariat. The bourgeoisie is a social class term for the upper class, and the proletariat is a social class term for a worker. These two social classes are opposite each other.

One of the literary works that represent a social class is *The Outsiders* novel by S.E. Hinton. The novel was originally published in 1967. The researcher used *The Outsiders* 50th Anniversary Edition published by Penguin Books (2016) because the latest edition is as well as easy-to-understand language and there is a brief summary of the author's background. *The Outsiders* novel tells the story of how life is between two groups of gangs, they are The Greasers and The Socs. These two groups contradict each other and conflicts often occur. The main character of this novel is Ponyboy Curtis and he is from the lower class, The Greasers. The Greasers always get violent with The Socs because as it is known The Socs are rich kids and they usually persecute The Greasers. This study aims to present a representation of social class in *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton novel.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

A novel is typically defined as a long work of fiction that explores characters, events, and settings in a narrative form. It is considered a major genre of literature and is distinguished by its extended length and complexity compared to shorter forms of fiction. Moreover, the novel is regarded as one of the central genres of literature, alongside other forms like comedy, tragedy, romance, and satire. What makes this form distinctive is its realistic depictions of people, situations, and surroundings, as well as an interest in the complexity of social relationships and human experience. Unlike other genres, such as myth or romance, the novel focuses on everyday life and the struggles of ordinary people.

In relation to this, character is one of the most important elements in a novel because a character serves as a replacement or representative figure for living beings from the real world in literary works. Furthermore, characterization refers to the personality that is presented in a character. Essentially, characterization is the process of developing characters in a novel. It is the way that the author reveals the characters' personalities, motivations, and backstories. Generally, there are two main methods of characterization: direct and indirect.

Shifting to another perspective, Marxism is a socio-political and economic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. It provides a framework for understanding society, history, and economics, with the ultimate goal of achieving a classless society where wealth and resources are distributed equitably. Specifically, the Marxist approach to society focuses on the concepts of exploitation and worker alienation. According to this

theory, capitalism is a system of exploitation in which the working class is forced to sell their labor power to the capitalist class in exchange for a wage that is less than the value of their labor. As Bressler explains, Marxism is “a social, political, and economic, and cultural understanding of the nature of reality, society, and the individual” (Bressler 166).

Closely related to Marxist theory, social class refers to a hierarchical division of society based on economic and social factors. As stated by Piketty, “social classes are groups of individuals who occupy similar positions in the social hierarchy, based on their income, wealth, and occupation” (Piketty 10). In other words, social class is determined by an individual's position in the economic structure, particularly in relation to the ownership of capital and the earning of income (Piketty 15). More specifically, social classes can be categorized based on their access to and control over economic resources, primarily capital. As a consequence, social class inequality emerges when there is a difference in the distribution of resources, power, and prestige among different social groups (Aulia 296). This inequality can be observed in various aspects of life, including income and wealth disparities, access to quality education and healthcare, job opportunities, housing, and social mobility.

Building on this idea, the bourgeoisie is defined as a social class that holds “the economic power and thereby gains social and political control of their society” (Bressler 168). As Bressler argues, the bourgeoisie is the dominant class in capitalist society, using its power to exploit the working class. On the other hand, the proletariat is described as “the working class, especially those who are exploited by the capitalist class” (Bressler 168). Thus, the proletariat represents the exploited class in capitalist society, and, according to Marxist theory, it is the only class that can overthrow capitalism and create a classless society.

1. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used the qualitative descriptive method and marxist theory by Karl Marx to analyze the social class represented in *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton novel. The qualitative method aims to understand the meaning of human experiences and to develop theories that explain these experiences. The marxist theory was chosen as a theory for the research since it is concerned with finding a representation of social class in the novel.

The data in this research was presented in form of quotations, texts, narrations, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or dialogues connected to the representation of social class. The primary data is the novel itself, and the secondary data is taken from various resources such as journals, online or printed books, and articles from websites related to this research analysis.

The researcher analyzed the collected data by deconstructing the character of Mr. Pangloss in Voltaire's *Candide* based on Charles E Bressler's book entitled *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Therefore, there are a few steps that in analyzing the data from the novel, which are:

- 1) The researcher identified the social class represented in the work by analyzing the characters, their roles and relationships, and their socioeconomic status.
- 2) The researcher classified the signs of economic exploitation from wealth and power, the division of labor, and the relationship between workers and owners.
- 3) The researcher examined the work's portrayal of social relations by the characters' interactions, the power dynamics at play, and the values and beliefs that are reinforced through the work.

- 4) The researcher discovered for instances of resistance by the characters' actions and attitudes, as well as any themes of rebellion or revolution.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Optimistic Man VS Pessimistic Man

In the story, Mr. Pangloss was described as a philosopher from Westphalia who keeps his optimism as a value to live. In the previous study by Sydney Adam, he also considered Pangloss as someone who refuses to relent in his optimism. In general, optimism is used to express a positive attitude and is also a part of positive psychology that acts as a good expectancy that is opposed to bad outcomes that will occur when someone is confronted with problems.

According to Scheier and Carver, optimism is defined as an act of good expectancy that is opposed to bad outcomes that will occur when someone is confronted with problems. They also stated that there are some characteristics of optimism which are: having self-confidence, never getting disappointed easily, and being a motivation factor (879).

The first optimistic characteristic in Mr. Pangloss's character can be identified through his self-confidence. Mr. Pangloss is someone who confident in himself, which leads him to be courageous and tend to be fearless. When speaking with Candide and several other characters, he exudes confidence. This confidence arose from the experiences he went through during his time as a teacher in Westphalia, where he was also appointed as the oracle of the Kingdom. This was proven by the data below:

Master Pangloss taught the metaphysico–theologo–cosmologology. **He could prove to admiration that there is no effect without a cause; and, that in this best of all possible worlds**, the Baron's castle was the most magnificent of all (Voltaire 1)

Pangloss, during the course of the voyage, **explained to him how everything was so constituted that it could not be better**. James did not quite agree with him on this point. (Voltaire 10)

From the text above, Pangloss and James debate about the cause of the war in Westphalia. Pangloss explains the situation with confidence, believing that everything was made in the best possible way. Even after the tragedy, Pangloss still believes that everything was made in the best possible way, which James disagrees with.

After being deconstructed, Mr. Pangloss is revealed to be a pessimistic person, which aligns with Martin Seligman's definition of pessimism as a habit of mind that leads to a depressed mood, resignation, underachievement, and poor physical health (Seligman 50-51). His pessimism stems largely from his deep-seated insecurity, which manifests in his lack of confidence and self-worth. One of the key factors contributing to his pessimism is his insecurity about his physical appearance. Before his misfortunes, he may have had a more optimistic outlook, but the traumatic experiences he endured completely altered his perception of himself. After surviving a series of brutal events—being hanged by the Lisbon people and later enslaved by the Turks—he suffered severe physical disfigurements, including the loss of one of his eyes and ears, as well as damage to his nose. These injuries not only changed his external appearance but also profoundly impacted his self-esteem.

His physical deformities made him feel ashamed and unworthy, reinforcing his pessimistic worldview. This insecurity became particularly evident in his reluctance to reunite with Pacquette, the woman he once loved. Instead of seeing a possibility for love or acceptance, he assumed that his disfigurement would lead to rejection and humiliation. His fear of facing Pacquette reflects a broader pattern of learned helplessness where individuals, after repeated negative experiences, begin to believe they have no control over their fate and thus stop trying to improve their circumstances. The following data describes his feeling when reunited with Pacquette:

Pangloss to Pacquette, “it is Heaven that has brought you here among us, my poor child! Do you know that you have cost me the tip of my nose, one eye, and one ear? **What a handsome shape is here! and what is this world!**” (Voltaire 95)

2. Idealistic Man VS Realistic Man

The narrator of the story describes Pangloss as an idealistic person who aspires to discover who they are and how they might become their best possible selves. Idealists are compelled to work with people, whether in education or counseling. Pangloss's characteristic as an idealist can be seen in his role as an educator or teacher, where he had a talent for motivating and teaching others to develop personally and realize their full potential. He had been doing this with the people in Westphalia and as the mentor of Candide:

Pangloss, the preceptor, was the oracle of the family, and **little Candide listened to his instructions with all the simplicity natural to his age and disposition.** (Voltaire 1)

However, after deconstructed Mr. Pangloss is also found as a realistic person who accepts things as they are and does not make decisions based on assumptions or unlikely hopes for the future. After almost being hanged by the people of Lisbon, he asked for help from those around him, even though he knew they were the people who wanted to hang him. Pangloss is also a person who is quite expressive in expressing his emotions. When Pangloss and Candide are in a bad situation, he will share his feelings of despair with Candide. When he feels unable to do something, he will also tell Candide about that. The following is an evidence of Pangloss's realistic character:

I trembled from head to foot at **hearing her talk in this manner, and exerted what little strength I had left to cry out, ‘Have mercy on me!’** I trembled from head to foot at **hearing her talk in this manner, and exerted what little strength I had left to cry out, ‘Have mercy on me!’** (Voltaire 91)

“**Oh, Lord!**” cried Pangloss, “**I am so weak I cannot stand,**” upon which Candide instantly led him to the Anabaptist's stable, and procured him something to eat. (Voltaire 8)

From the quote above, it can be seen that Pangloss shares his feeling with Candide that he was weak and cannot move which makes Candide immediately takes him to the Anabaptist's

place to give him a portion of food. Mr. Pangloss realizes that he cannot continue his journey while he was weak and not forcing himself and Candide to keep moving.

3. Smart Man VS Stupid Man

According to Cambridge Dictionary, smart is defined as someone who is intelligent, or able to think quickly or intelligently in different situations. A smart person also has some characteristics which are open-mindedness, great self-control, and not being conditioned by prejudice. The first example shows Mr. Pangloss's quality as a smart person can be seen from his background. In the story, Mr. Pangloss is an academic discipline who learns metaphysics, theology, and cosmology in Westphalia. He gave lectures to the people of Westphalia and was also called the oracle of because he was trusted by the royal family to teach and educate the people in the kingdom. Thus implicating that he was an intellectual figure in Westphalia:

Pangloss, **the preceptor, was the oracle of the family**, and little Candide listened to his instructions with all the simplicity natural to his age and disposition. (Voltaire 1)

From the quote above, it can be seen that Pangloss had two titles which are the preceptor and the oracle. According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, the preceptor defines as a teacher or someone who trains people about some subjects, while the oracle is someone who knows a lot about a subject and can give good advice. Based on this definition, Mr. Pangloss fits the character of a smart man because he had a characteristic of someone intelligent.

After being deconstructed, the meaning of the character of Mr. Pangloss can also be identified as stupid. According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, stupid means someone who has little intelligence, poor judgment, and a lack of understanding of the information about something. The quality of Mr. Pangloss as a stupid man can be seen during specific events in the novel. When Pangloss and Candide met with the civilians in Lisbon after the earthquake, They ended up being hanged by de facto because they were against the opinion of one of the citizens of Lisbon (Voltaire 14). Pangloss's inability as an academic to solve problems that occur in the story shows that he is not wise enough in making every decision in his actions and seems careless. This inability to solve problems could make the readers question his intelligence because if he is fully educated and understands the situation, he can certainly solve the existing problems without having to end up being hanged or dissected.

The author also describes Mr. Pangloss's philosophy as poor philosophy that lacks knowledge. This can be seen from how Candide and Curgunde begin to realize that the things that happened between them are something that they did not get from Mr. Pangloss's teaching in the past:

During their voyage they amused themselves with **many profound reasonings on poor Pangloss's philosophy**. (Voltaire 24)

Mr. Pangloss also produces illogical arguments to support his preconceived notions, justifying the consumption of pork by saying that *since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all year round* (Voltaire 2) or how he connects the tragedy of war with mythological creatures such as centaurs and satyrs, which were unimportant at the time.

4. Good Man VS Evil Man

According to Proctor in her journal called *The Importance of Good Character*, good character defines as someone who lives a virtuous life or those who engage in virtuous activities that are considered by people as good people. For example, good characters have been found to have thriving behaviors, such as leadership, valuing diversity, helping others, and wisdom (13). Mr. Pangloss's character as a good man can be identified in his sense of justice. From his perspective, all things that have been created in this world must be fair and should not be taken away, because he thinks that it is against universal reason. His sense of justice can be seen when Mr. Pangloss tried to stop a sailor in Lisbon who wanted to rob a civilian's money, which he tried to stop because it might harm others:

Pangloss pulled him by the sleeve. **“Friend,” said he, “this is not right, you trespass against the universal reason, and have mistaken your time.”** (Voltaire 12)

Mr. Pangloss is also someone who cares about the people around him. It can be seen from how he cares so much about Candide's condition and supports him during difficult times on their journey:

“Dead!” cried Candide, and immediately fainted away; **his friend restored him by the help of a little bad vinegar, which he found by chance in the stable.** (Voltaire 9)

However, after deeply analyzing the text and after deconstructing it, it turns out that the meaning of character of Mr. Pangloss was also found as an evil man. According to Haybron in his journal called *Evil Character 1*, an evil character is defined as a figure who feels pleasure at the pain of others. The action of an evil character tends to be immoral and can harm others (2).

Mr. Pangloss as an evil person can be identified as Mr. Pangloss letting James drown to his death during the shipwreck. At that moment, Candide and Pangloss had a disagreement in which Candide wanted to help James but Pangloss forbade him by saying that letting him drown was the best action this world could provide. This became a debate between the two of them since Candie wants to save James who had tried to sacrifice himself to save the lives of his crew, while Pangloss felt that James was indeed drowned for a good cause. Mr. Pangloss's action during this moment shows that he let someone die because he thinks that he deserves it (Voltaire 12).

Another example of Mr. Pangloss's character as an evil man can be identified from his immoral values. Mr. Pangloss had the attitude of someone who breeds all kinds of accidents or evil things to happen, and there is no need to change things perceived as evil or wrong because that is what the best possible world could be. He even persuades Candide that: “The best of all possible worlds must include Cunegonde's evisceration and rape, just as it does her beauty and love; evil is an indispensable aspect of the best of all worlds, a required ingredient for the sake of a better world” (Voltaire 10).

5. Discussion

The researcher describes how deconstruction deconstructs the character of Mr. Pangloss in Candide. He assumed that the fixed meaning of the character can be interpreted into different meanings by using the deconstruction theory and a deconstructive reading strategy by Bressler.

The researcher discovered that Bressler's deconstruction steps are appropriate for the process of discovering another meaning for the character of Mr. Pangloss. Based on this step, the researcher finds an interpretation through the character of Mr. Pangloss, who stands opposite the privileged hierarchy. There are five unprivileged meanings as the result of double reading the text to the fixed meaning of the character of Mr. Pangloss: optimistic man versus pessimistic man, idealistic man versus realistic man, smart man versus stupid man, non-discriminative man vs discriminative man, and good man versus evil man.

Mr. Pangloss is an optimistic figure who is confident, fearless, and does not give up easily, but is also pessimistic about his life. He is an idealistic character who does not hesitate to help and develop the potential of other people, but is also realistic. He is an educated character who can think quickly and is a good advisor, but also has a reckless nature. He stands for human equality, but also gives bad treatment to one specific race. He is a good man who is supportive, happy to help, and cares about his friends, but is also an evil man who is feeling grateful for letting people die and normalizing evil deeds when it brings a good impact on world.

The analysis of Mr. Pangloss's character, after being deconstructed, reveals that he embodies both positive and negative traits through binary opposition. Some of the characters in the novel can be considered as supporting data in finding another meaning in Mr. Pangloss's character. As a satirical genre novel, deconstruction sees criticism, humor, and irony in this novel as a space to find meanings that are not privileged. Because the readers are given attention through existing humor and rule out possible meanings that are written outside of the author's intention. Deconstruction is not necessarily humorous, but is intended to take the elements of a genre or typical trope and to question them or subvert expectations that the author conveys to the readers.

E. CONCLUSION

The researcher analyzed Mr. Pangloss's character in Voltaire's *Candide* novel and found that there are binary oppositions found in the characteristic. The previously fixed meaning considered Mr. Pangloss as optimistic, idealistic, smart, non-discriminative, and a good man. Through deconstruction analysis, the researcher found that the character is also identified as pessimistic, realistic, stupid, and an evil man. Deconstruction has merged the limits created between characters and there is no such thing as a protagonist or antagonist character anymore because characters have both positive and negative sides.

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