

THE REPRESENTATION OF CLASS STRUGGLE AS THE RESPONSE OF ALIENATION IN *THE GREATEST SHOWMAN* (2017) FILM

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe the class struggle as the response of five variants alienation namely powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement in *The Greatest Showman* film. This research also aims to reveal how the alienated characters did the class struggle because of the bad treatment and the unfair action they got then attempted to change their life condition and defend themselves. The data in this qualitative research are words, phrases, and sentences based on dialogues, narrations and monologues that indicated the alienation and class struggle in the film. The findings of this research showed that Barnum as the main character experienced alienation in the form of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness and self-estrangement. Meanwhile, the other characters such as Barnum's family and the circus members experienced powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation. The characters of this film also did class struggle by two aspects which are economic and political. From the economic, the alienated people try to improve their living conditions to have a better life and more decent. From the political, the alienated people also struggle against the oppressor and defend their rights by fighting back the people who alienated them.

Key words: Alienation, Class Struggle, Characterization, Character.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan perjuangan kelas sebagai respon dari lima varian alienasi yaitu ketidakberdayaan, ketidakberartian, ketidakberaturan, isolasi dan keterasingan diri dari film *The Greatest Showman*. Penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengungkapkan bagaimana karakter – karakter yang teralienasi melakukan perjuangan kelas atas perlakuan buruk dan tindakan tidak adil yang mereka dapatkan kemudian berusaha untuk mengubah kondisi hidup mereka menjadi lebih baik dan membela diri mereka. Data pada penelitian kualitatif ini adalah kata, frasa dan kalimat yang berdasarkan dari dialog, narasi dan monolog yang menunjukkan alienasi dan perjuangan kelas di film tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Barnum sebagai pemeran utama mengalami alienasi varian ketidakberdayaan, ketidakberartian, tidak ada norma dan keterasingan diri. Sedangkan karakter lain seperti keluarga Barnum dan anggota sirkus mengalami ketidakberdayaan, ketidakberartian dan isolasi. Karakter – karakter tersebut juga melakukan perjuangan kelas dari dua aspek yaitu ekonomi dan politik. Dari segi ekonomi, karakter yang teralienasi

mencoba untuk memperbaiki kondisi kehidupan mereka menjadi lebih baik dan layak. Dari segi politik, karakter yang tealienasi juga berjuang melawan kaum penindas dan mempertahankan hak hak mereka dengan melawan orang – orang yang mengasingkan mereka.

Kata kunci: *Alienasi, perjuangan kelas, karakterisasi, karakter.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Class struggle as the response to alienation is still occur in the world. It happens because of the difference in social class. In Marxism, this class differences trigger the separator or alienation between humans. The powerless are alienated from their surroundings and the world where they live in remains alien to them (Fromm 44). It means the condition of the worker who gets a situation alienated from their life. Alienated people struggle to fight for their life conditions and rights which lead to the revolution with class struggle. Class struggle happens because of the injustice like alienation that exists in a society and it appears as long as the existence of exploitation continues in class society because exploitation creates inequality in society.

This research discussed about the representation of class struggle as the response of alienation in *The Greatest Showman* film using alienation and class struggle theory. The researcher used those theories to examine *The Greatest Showman* film because the problems that exist in this film are suitable with the theories that the researcher used to analyze. This research provided an overview and a very deep understanding of cases that often occur in human life, particularly in equalization, as seen in *The Greatest Showman* film. There are some issues regarding on social life, especially classes or injustices that the researcher analyzed based on the film which has chosen and used alienation and class struggle theory because these theories are very suitable to examine this movie that focuses on class.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Character & Characterization

Character is a person created for a work of fiction, they are people the author knows or people the author observed or overheard (Gordon & Kuehner 95) while characterization is the way in which a character is created (Gill 127). In characterization, the researcher uses indirect presentation which the author describes the behavior and physical characteristics of the character through the reaction, description of the environment, activities, the way of the character thinking, and also it can be expressed through the conversation between characters in the story (Perrine 66).

2. Alienation

Alienation means the relationship of an individual to another which is initially warm and then turns cold and finally separated. This happens because of a feeling that can change a person to be indifferent and result in alienation. According to Seeman, he divided that alienation has several variants as the consequences of their

a. Powerlessness

The expectancy or probability held by the individual that his own behavior cannot determine the occurrence of the outcomes, or reinforcements, he seeks (784). It is a belief that what is done by those who get alienated does not produce any effect or has no control over themselves.

b. Meaninglessness

The individual is unclear what to believe when the individual's minimum standards for clarity in decision making are not met (Seeman 786). It is the feeling that the occurrence of an event cannot be understood so that the assumption arises that everything that happens in the future will be difficult to predict. Meaninglessness cannot see or feels the meaning in action, a relationship, or other world affairs. Or have a feeling that life has no purpose.

c. Normlessness

It will develop to the extent that "the technically most effective procedure, whether culturally legitimate or not, becomes typically preferred to institutionally prescribed conduct (787). It is a feeling that goals which are not socially recognized are needed to achieve socially recognized objectives so that the assumption that an individual does not have to be bound to the standard values and morality prevails in his environment.

d. Isolation

The alienated in the isolation sense are those who, like the intellectual, assign low reward value to goals or beliefs that are typically highly valued in the given society (788-789). Isolation means feelings that arise in individuals who get low rewards for certain goals or beliefs, which are typically rated high in certain societies. Seeman views social isolation mainly as isolation from the goals or beliefs of one's culture. Also the sense of loneliness or exception, like being a minority in a group.

e. Self-Estrangement

Alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself (789). The individual feels alienated because he thinks of himself as something different. And because of that thought, he was estranged because of himself. Self-estrangement means not related to himself in different ways, generally unable to form their own identity.

3. Class Struggle

Conflict that occurred in society is caused by human exploitation then the result in alienation. This conditions lead the class struggle of the working class becomes a class conflict with the capital holding class (Barry 156-157). The alienated people do the struggle to get a better and appropriate life and be free from the social and economic evils such human exploitation. According to Wilczynski, the oppression felt by the oppressed is caused by two spheres. The first is the **economic struggle**, a struggle for the improvement of the conditions of work and life also a change in the principle (80). The oppressed people struggle to improve their lives. The second is the **political struggle**, the oppressed also struggle to reclaim and defend themselves. Both struggles have the same goal which concerns the revolution of the oppressed class.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative research method. The qualitative research itself is a research method which does not use any calculation or enumerating. According to Creswell, *qualitative research* is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (4). Qualitative research is characterized by its purpose, which is related to understanding some aspects of social life, and the methods that produce words, not numbers as the data to be analyzed. Therefore, the researcher used alienation theory to identify the variants of alienation that reflected in the movie. Then, the researcher also used the class struggle theory to answer the second research question, which was to describe how the struggle was reflected in the movie. The researcher also became the research instrument. It is because the researcher did the observation and the research herself.

The data source of this research is *The Greatest Showman* (2017) movie and the script of the movie while the data of this research are words, phrases, and sentences based on the dialogues, narrations and monologues of *The Greatest Showman* (2017) movie script which related to the alienation and class struggle that happen in the movie. The data collection of this research has several steps. The first step was watching *The Greatest Showman* movie and reading the script of the movie. Then, the researcher took notes from the data of the movie script in *The Greatest Showman* movie about alienation and class struggle. After the data have been collected, the researcher turned to analyze them. The first step was gathering the data. , the researcher gathered all of the information related to the alienation and class struggle based on the movie and the script from *The Greatest Showman* movie. The second step was memoing the data. the researcher took a personal note included the researcher's thoughts on the data, guesses, and the first hypotheses that come to mind. The third step was coding. In this research, the codes were categorized from the theory of five variants of alienation. The codes were taken from the shortened letter of each variant of alienation. And the last is analyzing the data. The researcher drew the conclusions or verification, where the conclusions would lead to the answers of the research questions.

D. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher gives explanation about the answer of the research questions. Firstly, the researcher examined the alienations as the cause of the class struggle which reflected in *The Greatest Showman* movie. Secondly, the researcher analyzed the process of class struggle as the response to the alienation that portrayed in *The Greatest Showman* movie.

1. The Five Variants of Alienation in *The Greatest Showman's* Characters

a. Powerlessness

Barnum saw Charity who was learning to behave in drink tea with her teacher. Barnum made a joke to her, but apparently she laughed and the tea was scattered. Immediately Charity's father calls his daughter to give her a lesson. The data was shown by the characterization

through the conversation between Charity's father and Barnum, also the reaction from Charity's father who slapped Barnum

Barnum : It's my fault, sir. I made her laugh.

Charity's father : Well, thank you for your honesty. Stay away from my daughter.

This data indicates as powerlessness because what Barnum said to Charity's father for the incident did not get any results. Barnum's opinion was also ignored by Charity's father and Barnum got a hard slap for making Charity laugh.

b. Meaninglessness

Barnum felt guilty to Charity because he made her laugh while Charity was studying. After that, Barnum sat pensively on the beach thinking about the incident. Not long after, Charity came over to Barnum. The data was shown by the characterization through the conversation;

Young Barnum : How'd you get out?

Young Charity : The window. Father is sending me to finishing school. I don't know what what my future will be.

When Charity knows that her father would send her to a finishing school, she immediately runs away through the window to come to Barnum and tell him about it. Young Charity can not do anything. She just resigned to accept the situation that she would be sent by her father. Charity even does not know how her life would be if she goes to that school. She also could not think about whether she would meet Barnum again or not. In the case of Charity, it is included as meaninglessness. Because what happened to Charity was made her unable to do anything because she was only a child. Charity can only follow what her father asked. Charity has been alienated by his father because of an incident she did. Ultimately, she unable to predict how her life to come.

c. Normlessness

Barnum and Charity played together and have the adventure to see an old house near the Charity house while singing a song, A Million Dreams. The data was shown by the characterization through the way of Barnum thinking.

They can say, they can say

It all sounds crazy'

They can say, they can say

I've lost my mind

I don't care, i don't care

So call me crazy

I will live in a world that I design

This data included normlessness because young Barnum no longer thinks about what people say. He does not care if people think that he is crazy. His behavior has changed since people

do not take him anymore. Finally, he has a purpose in life of his own. He would make his own world.

d. Isolation

Barnum decided to create a museum but it is filled with unique people. Barnum went to a house belonging to a little man named Charles, who he had met at the bank. The data was shown by the characterization through the way of Charles thinking.

Barnum : P.T. Barnum, at your service. I am putting together a show and I need a star.

Charles : You want people to laugh at me.

When Barnum invited him to join his circus, Charles did not agree because he thought people would see him as strange because of his abnormal growth. He felt that he could not meet the existing standards so that he had no purpose in life and only depended on his mother. This is the evidence that Charles withdrew from the environment. Also he felt lonely or exception, like being a minority in a group.

e. Self-Estrangement

After being fired and packing the goods, Barnum went home and immediately told his wife Charity what just happened to him. The data was shown by the characterization through the conversation and the way of Barnum thinking;

Charity : You're home early.

Barnum : And until further notice.

Charity : Well, I didn't think you were long for that job.

Barnum : Or any job, apparently.

Barnum feels disappointed in himself because he thought he would not be able to make his family happy, even more he was just fired. From Barnum's case, he felt that he was not suitable in all fields of work. He also felt dissatisfied with what he got. The income is also just barely enough. He said that this was not the life he promised for Charity because he knew Charity came from a rich family.

2. Class Struggle as the Response of Alienation in *The Greatest Showman's* Characters

a. Economic Struggle

Barnum experienced various variants of alienation. Barnum felt powerlessness because whatever effort he did, it did not produce anything. Not only that, Barnum also felt that the existing rules were ineffective for him. Therefore he dared to break the rules. Barnum also feels that he is not himself because there is no suitable job for him. This made Barnum struggle for his life. Because he had been alienated since he was a child and even when he grew up his business did not produce anything and he decided to borrow money from the bank. With that money, Barnum decided to build a museum. He also tried to get people to come to his museum. Barnum did a lot of promotions to get people interested in his museum. What has just been done is proof that he is carrying out a class struggle in economic perspective to change his life conditions then have the appropriate one as well as his family.

b. Political Struggle

Some of the citizens of New York asked the circus members to be disbanded because they thought the circus members were weird people and alienated them. But the members also fought them. They fight against the residents who kicked them out. The data was shown by the characterization through the reaction of the circus members;

Man : This is our town, son. We think you should leave. You and your freaks.
(He stared to W.D) And your spooks.

Circus Members : ATTACK!

The circus members were really angry at what the man said. Without thinking, W.D immediately hit the man's face. The circus members also immediately attacked the protesting citizens to defend themselves. A fight ensued between the circus members and the New Yorkers who did not want the presence of the weird people. This data proved as the class struggle by the political struggle perspective. Because class struggle describes the conflict between two classes which have different desires. It is also because the oppressed struggle to defend themselves.

E. CONCLUSION

The Greatest Showman film represented that Barnum, his family and all the circus members were alienated in the form of five variants of alienation which are powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement. The alienation of each character could be indicated by his or her status and physical appearance. Therefore, by analyzing these characterizations, the researcher discovered that Barnum as the main character got three variants of alienation which were powerlessness, normlessness and self-estrangement. Meanwhile, Barnum's family and the circus members also got three variants of alienation which were powerlessness, meaninglessness and isolation only.

All characters who experienced alienation engage in a class struggle. This is because they do not want to give up on their situation. Even though they were alienated, they were able to rise up and change their life condition. Especially Barnum, who had been alienated since he was a child and finally being equal to the upper class because of the class struggle he did. Likewise with the circus members. People no longer see them as some other creature but also as glorious human being. Barnum and the other characters who feel alienated, making them struggle to do something. They do not want just to stand quiet and treated unfairly by those who oppressed them. They will struggle to change their life conditions to have a better and the appropriate one by struggling from the economic perspective also to defend their rights since they are fellow human by struggling from the political perspective.

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