

THE IDEA OF CAPITALIST EXPLOITATION IN VICTORIAN ERA REPRESENTED IN CHARLES DICKENS' *OLIVER TWIST* NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

In Victorian era, Capitalism was known as an economic system in which power was dominated by private ownership. The work system applied in Capitalism influenced the life of Victorian era and literary works recorded it. The aim of this research is to identify the idea of capitalist exploitation that exists and to describe how capitalist exploitation is represented through character, characterization, and setting in *Oliver Twist* novel. This research uses a theory by Mariano Zukerfeld about the types of capitalist exploitation which appear through alienation, reproduction, and attention. This is accomplished through library research and the use of a Historicism approach to identify capitalist exploitation in the Victorian era. The result of this research shows that capitalist exploitation is mostly experienced by Oliver Twist as a representative of the lower class. The researcher can conclude that the lower class character, which emerged from the working class, has been subjected to various forms of capitalist exploitation, such as exploitation through alienation refers to labor power, exploitation through reproduction refers to labor product, and exploitation through attention refers to labor time.

Key Words: Capitalism, Historicism, Victorian Era, Capitalist Exploitation

ABSTRAK

Di era Victoria, Kapitalisme dikenal sebagai sistem ekonomi di mana kekuasaan didominasi oleh kepemilikan pribadi. Sistem kerja yang diterapkan dalam Kapitalisme kemudian mempengaruhi kehidupan di era Victoria dan karya sastra merekamnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi ide eksploitasi kapitalis yang ada dan mendeskripsikan bagaimana eksploitasi kapitalis direpresentasikan melalui karakter, penokohan, dan setting yang dilakukan pengarang novel Oliver Twist. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori Mariano Zukerfeld tentang jenis-jenis eksploitasi kapitalis yang muncul melalui alienasi, reproduksi, dan perhatian. Hal ini dilakukan melalui penelitian kepustakaan dan penggunaan pendekatan Historisisme untuk mengidentifikasi eksploitasi kapitalis di era Victoria. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa eksploitasi kapitalis sebagian besar dialami oleh Oliver Twist sebagai perwakilan dari kelas bawah. Peneliti dapat menyimpulkan bahwa karakter kelas bawah, yang muncul dari kelas pekerja, telah mengalami berbagai bentuk eksploitasi kapitalis, seperti eksploitasi melalui alienasi merujuk pada tenaga kerja yang dikuras, eksploitasi melalui reproduksi merujuk pada produk tenaga kerja yang dikuras, dan eksploitasi melalui perhatian merujuk pada waktu kerja yang dikuras.

Kata Kunci: Kapitalisme, Historisisme, Era Victoria, Kapitalis Eksploitasi

A. INTRODUCTION

Victorian era was a period that prioritized prosperity, peace, and great self-possession under the leadership of Queen Victoria around 1837-1901. She was the queen which has the longest reign of any British ruler and reached British history when Britain recorded a vast global empire, including a quarter population of this planet. According to Chrisp, it was a time of massive social change (5). It means from social life aspect to the economic aspect changed and many industries were established and developed through this era.

In order to investigate deeply about the Victorian era, Historicism is one of the solutions to back into the past events that were happening. Historicism is a reconstruction of the literary works and relevance as social documentation of the period. As Hamilton states that historicism is a critical movement that emphasizes the importance of historical meaning in the reading of all kinds of texts (1). Evidently, Historicism rises with the concept to analyze literary work which prioritizes the element of reflection on the period itself.

Based on explanation above, the researcher beholds that there are some ideas of Capitalist Exploitation which influence the literature from Victorian era and it was portrayed in Dickens' works as a fact that Capitalist Exploitation happened in that period. It can be seen from various famous Victorian literature that was called as "social problem novels" as Guy states generally the English fiction which written in the late 1840s until 1850s refers to the problem that happened in British society and popular with the term 'social problem' or 'industrial' novel (3). The ownership believed that the poor people were lazy and needed to be punished because they were born to be slaves. This perspective becomes one of the reasons of this research, to know more about Capitalist Exploitation and the Victorian society which were represented in *Oliver Twist* novel. The subsequent reason in choosing this topic is to prove how the Capitalism works and has affected the lower class who struggles to get what they need and how the work of literature keeps the record of the happenings. Therefore, in this study, the researcher analyzes the idea of Capitalism in Victorian era using Capitalist exploitation theory by Zukerfeld and how its represented in *Oliver Twist* novel.

B. RELATED LITERATURE

1. Elements of Prose

The researcher presents some element of prose which supports the researcher in analyzing the idea of Capitalism in Victorian era by character, characterization and setting:

a. Character

Character is one of the intrinsic elements of prose, and it is the important element that builds the plot of the story by the appearance, attitude and a personality of figures in the fiction. Foster states the relation of characters to the other aspects of the novel will form the subject of a future inquiry. At present we are occupied with their relation to actual life (44).

b. Characterization

Character or person in literary works, that have their own role are very important to complement the story and every character have their own characterization. It means character and characterization has relation to each other. Characterization is a process of revealing the personality of character appearance in a story. Griffith argues characterization is the author's presentation and development of the traits of the characters (62). The way to show how the character is presented in the story by the author itself. Furthermore, characterizations helps to identified and differentiate each character in the story.

1. Direct Characterization

This type of characterization commonly showed by the author itself and the character focused on the author presentation. According to Kenan, such naming of a character's qualities counts as direct characterization only if it proceeds from the most authoritative voice in the text (62). Direct characterization traits by using a directly way.

2. Indirect Characterization

This is the second type of characterization, which is indirectly showed. According to Kenan, a presentation is indirect when rather than mentioning a trait, it displays and exemplifies it in various ways. Some of these ways will be enumerated in the following discussion (63).

c. Setting

Setting is one of important element which is to complete the story. The purposes of setting are to give information about the background, to provide mood and atmosphere of a story. Generally, it is context of time and place in order to support action, characters, and narrative perspective from an additional level.

2. Capitalist Exploitation

By the point of Capitalism, exploitation is important in the dynamic of Capitalism history. According to Zukerfeld, capitalist exploitation is clearly the central point in capitalism's dynamic, and it has also influenced the historical development of capitalism (115). To define the characteristic of capitalist exploitation is when the capitalist and the lower class are both involved to the productive processes and the lower class are most exploited by. The capitalist applies lower costs for production and allows heavy labor time for the worker with less paid.

It is also clarified by Zukerfeld in his book that in a manufacturing productive process, if a worker works for ten hours and only paid for the value of five hours, evidently the worker is exploited (138). To clarify, the important point of capitalist exploitation is the relationship between the capitalist and the worker in the productive process. Furthermore, besides the working time, Zukerfeld has explained that energy and knowledge also the components of exploitation, but each type is defined in a different way. Labor power in this term refers to the energy of the worker while labor product refers to knowledge as a skill of the worker. Knowledge is the source of surplus value while energy only needs to be charged every day. In this part, every type of exploitation generates a profit for the capitalist at the expense of workers. According to Zukerfeld, there are three concerns of capitalist exploitation that can be seen as the following explanation.

a. Exploitation through Alienation

To limit the broad understanding about alienation, Zukerfeld has his own explanation about exploitation through alienation. This type refers to the idea that the worker 'sells' their own 'labor power' to the capitalist at a specific point in the manufacturing process. As already described above, that of labor power refers to the energy of the workforce being depleted. Not only energy, but time and knowledge (skills) also contributed to this exploitation. After all, it does not mean that everything the worker sacrifices is unpaid, but is paid disproportionately. The essence of exploitation lies in the worker *not receiving the total value of their knowledges*, but there is a long distance between nothing and everything (144). Meanwhile, the worker does not get what they should have gotten and they are paid less than they should have had.

b. Exploitation through Reproduction

To define clearly, this type of exploitation prioritizes the knowledge or the skill of the worker which refers to the labor product. The owner of the knowledge is exploited by the capitalist who rules and codifies all the knowledge. In these cases, labor does not lose their knowledge, it continues possessing them, but capital has copied them and can then dispense with the bearer that the workers represent (Zukerfeld 129). Indeed, the worker are exploited by their own knowledge because of capitalist rule. The knowledge implicated can come from a broad variety of knowledge associated with work skills (145). Meanwhile, the capitalist exploits the worker by draining all of the knowledge and skill, then making it as a private property. According to Zukerfeld, this type of exploitation is to make the worker as the owner of the knowledge exploited by their own knowledge.

c. Exploitation through Attention

To define this type of capitalist exploitation which is exploitation through attention refers to the human attention that is exploited by the capitalist which is has a relation in the productive process. Indeed, without realizing that the worker got exploited from their attention and of course time too which refers to labor time.

The types of capitalist exploitation mentioned above help the researcher to identify the idea of Capitalism that exists in *Oliver Twist* novel and the literary elements such as character, characterization and setting shows how the Capitalist Exploitation is represented in *Oliver Twist* novel.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher uses qualitative research methodology because this research uses the text of the novel for data in *Oliver Twist* novel. The main focus in qualitative research is trying to find data in the form of text with the relationship between theory and study that match with this research. Furthermore, the data has two kind, primary data (words, phrase, sentence, and paragraph) and secondary data (books, journals, articles).

In collecting data, a close reading to the novel was executed while underlining and making notes next to the data. After that, the analysis of the data was executed in several steps, there are: read comprehensive, identify the description or event, classify the event, and wrote down all of the data.

The main theory of this research is Capitalist Exploitation by Mariano Zukerfeld which is rooted in the Capitalism theory. Capitalist Exploitation has several various in defined exploitation and there are exploitation through alienation, reproduction and attention. Subsequent, the researcher uses Historicism as a connector to the Victorian era because it is refers to time and space, such as historical period, geographical place, and local culture.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

a. Exploitation through Alienation

The researcher presents the data which related to the first type of capitalist exploitation according to Zukerfeld. The first data shows that Oliver belongs to the lower class which is the working class because Oliver was born as an orphan and adopted by the parish.

Upon this, the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, **that Oliver should be 'farmed,' or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch workhouse some three miles off**, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, (7-8).

As stated above, this data classified into indirect characterization through environment, because the sentence above indicates that is clearly describes the conditions and situations where Oliver should be "**farmed**" which is also a branch office of the previous workhouse and located more far away.

b. Exploitation through Reproduction

In general, mostly people only know the exploitation by its cover without know the exploitation divided into several type and term. This type of exploitation prioritizes the knowledge or the skill of the worker itself which refers to the labor product.

The next morning, the public were once informed that Oliver Twist was again **To Let**, and that five pounds would be paid to anybody who would take possession of him (34).

The data above is defined into this type because the parish wants little Oliver taken care by someone out there, even though for his whole live Oliver work hard and begin to pick oakum in the early morning every day. To let related to something that is no longer to used and to be thrown away without thinking about what that person has been doing for parish all the time. The parish willing to pay dearly for anyone who want to take care of poor Oliver.

c. Exploitation through Attention

This type focuses on the way the exploitation existed not only in general way, without realizing in terms of time. Mostly, people only knows that exploitation is the powerless individuals or even group who controlled by the ownership.

‘Summarily,’ replied Mr. Fang. **‘He stands committed for three months—hard labour of course.** Clear the office.’ The door was opened for this purpose, and a couple of men were preparing to carry the insensible boy to his cell; (118-119).

The data above represents exploitation through attention and is done by an indirect characterization through environment. According to Kenan, in nineteenth century, the relation between character and environment was established, it is interconnection to a character’s physical surrounding. In this conversation, Oliver faced trial when he and his new friends got into action and eventually Oliver was caught by the police for the mistake that he did not commit. The word **office** and **cell** are referring to the environment and the surroundings that Oliver had to face once again after he escaped from Mr. Sowerberry’s house and decided to go far away from the small village. He entered the public place and then instead met the old Fagin who also came from the lower class and exploited the children.

E. CONCLUSION

In conclude, the capitalist exploitation mostly represented through the indirect characterization by Oliver Twist as the main character and the other characters in the novel. It appears through action, speech, external appearance, and environment. Indeed, the capitalist exploitation also represented through direct characterization and setting.

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