

The Social Problems Found in Charles Dicken's Novel "A Tale of Two Cities" (Pre-Revolution of French Context)

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to analyze the problem of social condition of French society before the revolution portrait in A Tale of Two Cities novel written by Charles Dickens. The linkage of literary works as a portrayal of a social life proves that a literary work always has partiality. Therefore, it can be said that literary work is a tendentious work which means having certain purposes behind its creation. This research uses the qualitative and sociology of literature approach. The result of the research that the social condition of French society during revolution where the people live in poverty where the poor people exploited by the noble, famine struck in every corner of the city, rigid of law during the monarchy system, and power abuse by the nobles to the poor people, which lead this into revolution lead by the poor people. The Researcher concluded that social conditions of the society before the revolution are poverty, famine, rigid law, and power abuse.

KEYWORDS: sociology of literature, social condition, pre-revolution.

I. INTRODUCTION

The social problem is a common issue within the world. The society from the past time to present time, and probably in the future time perpetually faces this sort of issue. It's sort of a chronic illness to the human population, as a result of a number of the social issues happen from time to time. Luckily, humans with their ability always attempt to find the way to face one problem to a different and eventually find the right resolution to unravel it. There are some ways to visualize the social problem among society, and one amongst the ways is through literary work. Wellek & Warren (1956, p. 768) stated that the term literature seems best if it is limited to the art of literature, i.e., to imaginative literature. According to Rahman & Rahman, (2019, p.112) mention that literature is also produced by the imagination of the author. Base on Literature is not just a document of facts; it is not just the collection of real events though it may happen in the real life. Literature can create its own world as a product of unlimited imagination. In other words, literature is a piece of artistic writing, derived from the deepest thought, combined with the reflection of the real-life situation and the imagination of the author, which can affect many aspects of human life (Wee and Banister, 2016; Hasnia, et al., 2021).

Base on Gholami & Joodaki's theory (2014, p.646) state that, in speaking literature there are 3 general types: poetry, prose, and drama. The form of every type is different. In terms of the width of the story and the complexness of the plot and characterization, novel will affect the lifetime of an individual greater than the opposite style of literary works. Thanks to that, novel is the most fascinating and among the most difficult issue to analyze. The readers of a novel can get an image of the social life of society of the time once the novel was written that portrayed within the novel.

There are countless great authors of a novel, and Charles Dickens is one of the best authors. Charles Dickens was a British novelist, journalist, editor, illustrator, and social commentator who wrote such fantastic classic novels some of them are *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Saint Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. Dickens through his works managed to bring a considerable change to society as a result of it contains criticism of the Victorian Era, which makes him one amongst the most influential writers within the nineteenth century.

Looking at the influence that (Dickens, 2007) has achieved and the complexity of the story of his novels, the researcher decided to analyze one of his literary works, which is *A Tale of Two Cities*. The novel itself tells a story about Charles Darnay who tries to escape his heritage as a French aristocrat in the years leading up to the French Revolution. During the Revolution, he is captured, but Sydney Carton, a man who looks like Darnay, who takes his place, and dies on the guillotine. Arniati, et al., (2019) stated that a story of love, friendship, social stratification, poverty, power abuse, rebellion, terror, sacrifice, and so on happens through the story and beautifully described by Charles Dickens in his novel.

France, which is the setting of place of the novel, became famous because of how civilized their people are, from then until now. But France also has a dark past, a history of revolution which caused so many casualties during the period. Because of this, the researcher decided to choose Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* because it has complete pictures of the social condition during the French Revolution which was well-described by Charles Dickens through his novel. Thus, the researcher focuses on social problem of French society during revolution.

II. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Hippolyte Taine a Frenchman is regarded as the father of the sociology of literature. Taine provided a systematic formula of 'race, milieu (environmental condition), and moment (socio-political condition)' to comprehend and analyze literature in the context of the sociological approach to the study of literature and the combination of these three factors (race, milieu, and moment) (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972, p.31). Furthermore, it produces a mental structure of the authors which later materialized in their works.

Rahman & Weda (2019, p. 38) claim that sociology of Literature is one among the branches of literary studies, literature is a social reflection. In many cases, social condition will be a trigger of the creation of literary works. In this context, literary works will be considered as good work as long as it was able to reflect or portray the social condition of the time that it was written.

According to Goldmann (1975, p.4), "basically, the novel, for the first part of its history, was a biography and a social chronicle and so it has always been possible to show that the social chronicle reflected to a greater or lesser degree the society of the period – and one does not have to be a sociologist to see that." It means that literary work especially novel can be a reference to identify the social condition at the time when the novel was written (Sukmawaty, et al., 2022). Therefore, only a good literary that may reflect the social condition of the societies, as a result of some authors contemplate a unique as simply a material to sell, so it's lesser value than the work in which the author is considering writing a good literary work for the reader.

Based on the definitions above, the researcher concludes that sociology of literature specializing in the social condition that reflected within the literary work, which already combined with the imagination of the author. The sociology of literature theory works by analyzing the social background of the author, the social condition of the time when the literary work was written, and therefore the link between the real-life event, which are the social life of the author and the social condition when he/she wrote his/her work and the event that happened in the novel. Finding that connection is the main purpose of choosing the sociology of literature approach, to prove that a literary work is not only a pure imagination of the researcher but it is a combined idea with the social life of the author and the society.

Indrasari, et al., (2020) state that by looking at some definitions above and how the theory sociology of literature works in analyzing literary works make the researcher decide to choose the theory. The theory sociology of literature is suitable to fill the needs of the researcher because the researcher needs this theory to

find out the social condition within the society which are reflected or portrayed in the novel that can easily discover by using the theory sociology of literature.

Barkan (2012, p. 4) claim in his book of *A Primer on Social Problem* said that any condition or behavior/activity which has negative impacts for the population of people and being recognized by many people is called social problem. This definition has both an objective component and a subjective component. The objective component is any condition or behavior can be considered as a social problem if it has negative consequences for large numbers of people. For subjective component, the social problem can be said as a social problem if the citizens, policymakers, or other parties of a specific region or area generally agreed to call a particular condition or behavior social problems, because it varies depends on the region and its social and cultural background. As for some previous researchers who studied novels such as current research but used a different approach, including:

Singer (2011) done the research entitled *A Novel Approach: The Sociology of Literature, Children's Books, and Social Inequality*. This research examines the complexity of literary analysis and the implications of using fiction as a source of sociological data. This research tends to embed literary analysis with sociological imagination. This study uses a random sample of children's novels published between 1930 and 1980, Moreover this article describes a methodological approach to the analysis of children's books and the subsequent development of the two categories of analytical novels. 1) Capturing books whose narratives describe and support unequal social orders 2) Capture of books whose narratives serve to identify inequalities and disrupt them. Furthermore, based on Griswold's methodological approach to literary fiction, this research examines how children's novels depict, challenge, or even subvert systems of inequality.

Da Silva and de Souza (2017) also examine novels with a literature review approach entitled *Novel materials for solid oxide fuel cell technologies: A literature review*. This study aims to examine new materials for solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC) applications covered in the literature. It was therefore found that the current operating conditions of SOFCs cause problems, such as carbon surface deposition, sulfur poisoning, and rapid degradation of components at high temperatures, which make them unsuitable for some applications. Moreover, most of the anode modifications aim to avoid some of the problems associated with the conventional use of Ni-based materials, such as carbon deposition and sulfur poisoning. In addition to increasing the catalytic activity, after these components are directly exposed to the fuel. Furthermore, it was also found in the literature on cathodes with the aim of developing materials with better properties over a wider temperature range, which have been compared with those currently used namely Perovskite LSM ($\text{La}_{1-x}\text{Sr}_x\text{MnO}_3$).

Syafaat, (2017) wrote about the study of the sociology of literature entitled *Teori Kelas Karl Marx Dalam Novel Entrok Karya Okky Madasari (Kajian Sosiologi Sastra)*. Novel *Entrok* by Okky Madasari contained social themes in Indonesian society especially in the new order era in which there were social conflict and alienation. Social conflict and alienation is a concept in Karl Marx's class theory. Based on this, the researchers chose the novel to be analyzed using the concept of Karl Marx class theory as already mentioned. There were two discussions in this research, namely social conflict and alienation on the novel *Entrok* by Okky Madasari. Every discussion will be outlined according to applied theory namely Karl Marx's class theory and terminology limitation that have decided. This was a qualitative descriptive research. The theory applied in this research was Karl Marx's class theory. The research results was the disclosure of Karl Marx class theory concept in the novel *Entrok* by Okky Madasari, namely social conflict and alienation. Social conflicts in *Entrok* novels were experienced by the upper and lower classes. The upper classes were those who have a part in the power within State like the soldiers, while the lower classes are those who have no power like the villagers of Singget. Social conflicts trigger class struggle due each class has a different collective interest and thus produces a series of collective actions which directed against the class. The class struggle will not end until a losing class. In the novel *Entrok*, it was depicted that the lower classes always lose when conflicting with the upper class because it has no part of the power in the state.

After looking at some of the previous studies above, it can be seen that there are some things that are the same as novels that are used as objects of research, but what is different is the approach used is very different, this research uses a social problem approach and this research aims to analyze the problem of social condition of

French society before the revolution portrait in A Tale of Two Cities novel written by Charles Dickens.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

In analyzing the data, the researcher used descriptive qualitative and sociology of literature. Based on the description of qualitative method, the writer would apply that method in conducting this research because the writer wants to describe social condition of French society in Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities novel. There are two types of source of data in this research, Primary data is the data which is collected from A Tale of Two Cities novel by Charles Dickens. Primary data includes: sentences, dialogue of characters that had been used as data of analysis that had been used as data to give the complete understanding of analysis. Secondary data is the data which is collected from many sources (some journals, books and thesis) that deal with the research object (material object). All the collected data would use theory sociology of literature to describe the social condition of French society portrait in Charles Dickens's A Tale of Two. All the selected data is analyzed to prove what are written in the object of this research and finally the writer can draw the conclusion for this research.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Social condition is the state of society in certain time or era. In the novel A Tale of Two Cities there are several social conditions that describe the in the novel which: poverty, violence, power abuse, and rigid law.

1. Poverty

How goes it, Jacques?' said one of these three to Monsieur Defarge.

'Is all the spilt wine swallowed?'

'Every drop, Jacques,' answered Monsieur Defarge.

'It is not often,' said the second of the three, addressing Monsieur Defarge,

'that many of these miserable beasts know the taste of wine, or of anything but black bread and death. Is it not so, Jacques?'(page 46)

The dialogue above between Ernest Defarge and the Jacques One, Two and Three regarding the people who drink the wine that had been spilt over outside the wine shop owned by Ernest Defarge, Defarge explain how miserable the poor people who fighting over for a sip of swine that spill over and Jacques Two that the poor people the only thing they tasted is black bread and death.

Saint Antoine, which a momentary gleam had driven from his sacred countenance, the darkness of it was heavy-cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance, and want, were the lords in waiting on the saintly presence-nobles of great power all of them; but, most especially the last. Samples of a people that had undergone a terrible grinding and regrinding in the mill, and certainly not in the fabulous mill which ground old people young, shivered at every corner, passed in and out at every doorway, looked from every window, fluttered in every vestige of a garment that the wind shook. The mill which had worked them down, was the mill that grinds young people old; the children had ancient faces and grave voices; and upon them, and upon the grown faces, and ploughed into every furrow of age and coming up afresh,

The paragraph above shows us how many social conditions such as heavy cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance, and poverty these problems is like guarding them like a knight escorting the noble, especially poverty as if the grinder who grind and regrind the people that make as if the mill which had make them worked them repeatedly that also make the young people looks old and have a hoarse voice.

From the data above we can conclude that the people are too poor to provide themselves, much less a decent meal. They can only eat a loaf of black bread to satisfy their own hunger and also how the poverty prevails in every nook and cranny of place that haunts the poor people, the poor become poorer they have to work very hard that make the young people look old and grave voice. The existence of monarchy has an impact on the

social life one of the example is taxation issued by leader of the country followed by the landowner and noble.

2. Famine

Hunger. It was prevalent everywhere. Hunger was pushed out of the tall houses, in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was patched into them with straw and rag and wood and paper; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off; Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat. Hunger was the inscription on the baker's shelves, written in every small loaf of his scanty stock of bad bread; at the sausage-shop, in every dead-dog preparation that was offered for sale. Hunger rattled its dry bones among the roasting chestnuts in the turned cylinder; Hunger was shred into atomics in every farthing porringer of husky chips of potato, fried with some reluctant drops of oil. (Page 41).

The data above shows us that hunger/famine happen in every corner of the place, hunger can be seen in how every shop that sell spoiled bread, sausage shop that sell a dead dog, hunger can be seen chip of potato fried using a few drops of oil. This caused by the high price of staple food in the form of bread and scarcity of wheat that happen in France because the monarchy also controls the price and the supply of man commodities which the people can't afford it.

3. Rigid Law

At that time, putting to death was a recipe much in vogue with all trades and professions, and not least of all with Tellson's. Death is Nature's remedy for all things, and why not Legislation's? Accordingly, the forger was put to Death; the utterer of a bad note was put to Death; the unlawful opener of a letter was put to Death; the purloiner of forty shillings and sixpence was put to Death; the holder of a horse at Tellson's door, who made off with it, was put to Death; the coiner of a bad shilling was put to Death; the sounders of three-fourths of the notes in the whole gamut of Crime, were put to Death. Based on the paragraph above that the legal conditions during the reign of the monarchy, criminals are tried by being given the death penalty, big or small the crime they have committed. This action was taken to reduce the number of crimes in this country but unfortunately on the contrary it made the crime rate increase (Page 74)

Based on the paragraph above explain the rigidity of law during the reign of monarchy, the criminal who committed a crime no matter how big or small the end result of that will be put to death sentence. this action was taken to reduce criminality in this country but unfortunately on the contrary it made the crime rate increase.

4. Power Abuse

"What did the two then, to persuade her husband to use his influence with her, to make her willing?"

'You know, Doctor, that it is among the Rights of these Nobles to harness us common dogs to carts, and drive us. They so harnessed him and drove him. You know that it is among their Rights to keep us in their grounds all night, quieting the frogs, in order that their noble sleep may not be disturbed. They kept him out in the unwholesome mists at night, and ordered him back into his harness in the day. But he was not persuaded. No! Taken out of harness one day at noon, to feed—if he could find food—he sobbed twelve times, once for every stroke of the bell, and died on her bosom.'

Based on the paragraph above the two brother nobles who used their power in order to get the boy sister to be with the noble little brother, he torture the sister husband by tying him to the carriage and pull him, they also command the boy family including the sister husband to make them silence noise caused by frog to let the noble brother sleep well, they let the sister husband kept watch in the coldness of night, and imprison the sister husband in the morning they torturing him until he is dead. The social condition show in this paragraph is power abuse noble have the right to decide each fate of the people lives in the land that they govern but this power should be used to enrich the land, help the people, and so on. Unfortunately, they used their authority to trample the people and torturing them even taxing them so highly to enrich themselves.

V. CONCLUSION

Charles Dickens's novel shows the social condition of French pre-revolution how the social condition of the people at that time under the monarchy system where the hierarchy and social class divided between clergy, nobles, and commoner, how rigid the law that make the one who committed crimes will be put to death, poverty everywhere, power abuse from the nobles, and famine that crept in every nook and cranny of the country. The nobles exploit their right by making themselves richer and make the poor people poorer. This novel shows us how to break from the monarchy system and the end of the feudalism in the country and turning it into democracy country that the people are equal.

The result of this research that the social condition of French society during revolution that the people live in poverty where the poor people exploited by the noble, famine struck in every corner of the city, rigid of law during the monarchy system, and power abuse by the nobles to the poor people, which lead this into revolution lead by the poor people. Moreover, the researcher concluded that social conditions of the society before the revolution are poverty, famine, rigid law, and power abuse.

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