



SOCIAL CLASS IN VICTORIA AVEYARD'S RED QUEEN

Trisni Dian Ningsih, Y.B Agung Prasaja

Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

trisnidiann@gmail.com; agungprasaja@untag-sby.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study is about an analysis of social class in Victoria Aveyard's Red Queen. This thesis aims to analyse social class in the novel. Qualitative research is used in this study. The problem statements are about social class and the relationships that exist between them. In the research, the analysis is conducted by using Marxist theory. The writer also finds that there are kinds of social class and their relationships. The Silvers are classified as the bourgeoisie, while the Reds are classified as the proletariat. The bourgeoisie in this novel is known as the royals, the nobility, and the rich people who are filled by the Silvers, while the proletariat is the Reds. They live to serve the Silvers, they work as servants, apprentices, and avant-garde soldiers. As Marx said that between these two classes there will be various kinds of conflicts. These conflicts arise because of inequalities or differences between them. Differences in social class can be seen in how social groups get their social status, use their privileges, and take advantage of their prestige. There is oppression of the Reds people, making them want to be free from the upper class oppression or exploitation through struggle against the Silvers. As for the efforts made by the Reds to avenge the inequality and oppression of the Silvers, it was through rebellion. The uprisings are portrayed epicly in this novel.

Keywords: social class, marxist, red queen, inequality, class struggle

1. INTRODUCTION

Social life is inseparable from stratification. The term stratification comes from the idea of layers, which means divisions in an object. Social stratification is a multi-layered system in society. According to Jeffries and Ransford, social stratification is the social structure that expresses common and traditional values (Jefries, 1980). Social stratification is a division of society into groups based on their economic status. It is a result of the different levels of power and wealth that people hold. Social stratification in society will usually be divided into social classes. As an example, a person who has legitimacy given within the school Intellectuals, such as lecturers, are in that position because of their position. Capital is socially and institutionally supported as it is often tied to other intellectual communities (Harimurti & Susanti, 2021).

In general, a social class is a group of individuals of similar social status in society. This is in line with the statement of Baubusse and Glaymann, they state that society can be divided into a system of distribution of social status stratification (Baubusse, G and Glaymann, 2004). There are two ways to get social status: first, a person gets his/her social status by struggling, such as being born into a poor family and having to work hard to become rich. While the second is the opposite, an individual does not need to struggle to achieve his or her social status, because they have been born rich or it can be said that they have come from a rich family for generations.

According to Marx, society as a whole is splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other, Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat (Gonçalves, 2016). The Bourgeoisie or better known as the upper class, because this class group is usually only filled by people in power, while the Proletariat as the lower class

contains the weakest peoples in society. The division of these two social classes gives rise to various differences, such as differences in privilege, prestige, and power.

Literature is a form of human creativity that tries to describe and explain the reality that happens in the world. Literature reflects the human experience in many ways. The literary work, including the novel, has valuable life lessons that can be of use to the readers. Danziger defines a novel as a piece of literature which attempts to describe the universe in which we live and tries to give a special value because we can learn so much from it (Danziger, 1973). There are many novels with the theme of social life, one of which is *Red Queen* written by Victoria Aveyard.

The *Red Queen* is set in a fantasy-dystopia world called Delphie. In this period, there are two clans, namely the Silvers who have silver blood and consist of various clans that have various powers, such as controlling fire, animals, and plants, controlling shadows or metal, even water and thoughts. While the Reds are ordinary humans who do not have any superpowers. The Silvers made themselves the upper class. They made the Reds as their slaves. The Reds became servants, soldiers, and lived under the poverty line and worshipped the Silver as if they were gods and goddesses.

In this study, the writer will discuss about class social inequality and the struggles of the lower class in the *Red Queen* novel. Victoria Aveyard as the author also raised sensitive issues that were happening, such as social inequality, nepotism, racial differences, and many more. Victoria Aveyard also reveals life from various angles. The *Red Queen* is definitely a heavy fantasy novel that has a lot of moral messages. The writer chose this novel because it reflects the social condition about social class issue. The writer used the sociological approach to find out about the social conditions in the novel. Moreover, the writer used Karl Marx's theory to classify a form of social class.

2. METHOD

The method used in this research is a qualitative method. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of speech or writing and behaviours of people are observed. Qualitative research aims to understand something that is not determined in advance, but obtained after conducting an analysis of the social reality focus of research. This type of the research refers to the meaning, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things that will explain why and how a certain phenomenon may occur (Berg, 2012)

In this study, the writer uses a sociological approach to find out the phenomenon of social class along with the relationship between inequality and struggle. Sociology of literature is the theory which analyzes the relation between authors and their social class, social status and ideology, condition of economics in their profession and the readers. The sociology of literature has a close relationship with Karl Marx's theory. Marx states that literature and all other cultural phenomena reflect patterns of economic relations because literature is bound to the classes that exist in society. Therefore, literary works can only be understood if they are related to these relationships (Laurenson, 2005).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There is a class distinction in which the members of society are divided into two main classes. Upper class is the class which is called as bourgeoisie and the lower class is the class which is called as proletariat or worker.

1. Bourgeoisie

The Bourgeoisie or upper class is the first grade class in society because they have significant financial or economic power, education and political power. In the object research, the writer found the characters that are categorized as upper class. The bourgeoisie or upper class in the novel is the Silvers. It can be proven at data:

I used to think there was only the divide, Silver and Red, rich and poor, king and slaves (Aveyard, 2015:74)

In the data, Mare Barrow mentions the difference between the Silver and the Red. She mentioned that the silver people as rich people and members of the kingdom. This is in accordance with Marx's explanation that the bourgeoisie as the upper class lives always richer and superior to the lower class.

2. Proletariat

The Proletariat or lower class are the people who work for the upper class. They don't have social status, less financial. They even don't have education that can bring them to get the good life. The proletariat or low class in the novel is the Red Blood clan. It can be proven at data:

"Mare Molly Barrow, born November seventeenth, 302 of the New Era to Daniel and Ruth Barrow"

"You have no occupation and are scheduled for conspiracy on your next birthday. You attend school sparingly, your academic test score are low, and you have a list of offenses that would land you in prison in most cities. Thievery, smuggling, resisting arrest, to name but a few. All together you are poor, rude, immoral, unintelligent, impoverished, bitter, stubborn, and a blight upon your village and my kingdom". (Aveyard, 2015:64)

In the data, the king of tiberias reveals the identity of Mare Barrow as a red person. he mentions that the red clan is poor, low educated, full of crimes according to Marx's explanation of the proletariat.

3. Social Class Relationship

The relationship between these two social classes is nothing more than a picture of ruler and servant. The bourgeoisie in this novel is known as the royals, the nobility and the rich people who are filled by the Silvers, while the proletariat is the Reds, they live to serve the Silvers, they work as servants, apprentices, and avant-garde soldiers. As Marx said that between these two classes there will be various kinds of conflicts, these conflicts arise because of inequalities or differences between them. Differences in social class can be seen from how social groups get their social status, use their privileges, and take advantage of their prestige.

3.1 Social Status

In this novel, the writer found that there are differences in social status between the Silver and the Red people. This can be proven in the data:

“I am my father’s heir, born to privilege and power and strength. You owe me your allegiance, just as I owe you my life. It is my duty to serve you and my kingdom as best I can - and beyond”. He’s rehearsed his speech, but the fervor Cal has can’t be faked. He believes in himself, that he’ll be a good king – or die trying. (Aveyard, 2015:77)

The data confirms that Cal is a prince and will one day become a king. This matched with the Ascribed status, Cal got his social status as the prince of his family. Cal's father and mother are the King and Queen of Northa. He mentions that since he was born he has had privilege, power, and strength. The Silver people who were born with special powers, making them the strongest people than the Reds. The Silver made itself a member of the kingdom and the nobility, they obtained this status from generation to generation without any struggle or gift from a stronger or larger group.

While the Reds who do not have the power. They are born as weak people so they have to do a lot of struggle to get social status. The social status they get is from the Silver gift. The Silvers give it based on the services or abilities that have been contributed to the Silver. This can be proven in the data:

First Friday attendance is mandatory, unless you are like my sister, an “essential laborer”. As if embroidering silk is essential. But the silvers love their silk, don’t they? Even the security officers, a few of them anyway can be bribed with pieces sewn by my sister. Not that i know anything about that. (Aveyard, 2015:3)

The data confirms that Gisa as younger sister of Mare Barrow become “essential laborer” or rather an apprentice for the silvers. This matched with the Achieved status because to get her social status Gisa had to struggle, she had to work the Silver.

3.2 Privilege

Privileges are owned by a person or group of people, and are not owned by other parties. In this novel, there are privileges possessed by the Silver/upper class which makes inequality more clearly displayed. As contained in the data:

Inside the open-topped arena is just as hot as out, and Kilorn always on his toes, leads me to some shade, we don’t get seats here, just long concrete benches, but the few Silvers nobles up above enjoy cool, comfortable boxes. There they have

drinks, food, ice, even in high summer, cushioned chairs, electric lights, and other comforts I'll never enjoy. The Silvers don't bat an eye at any of it, complaining about the "wretched conditions". I'll give them wretched condition. If I ever have the chance. All we get are hard benches and a few screechy video screens almost too bright and too noisy to stand. (Aveyard, 2015:4)

In the data, Mare Barrow as the main character explains that there is privilege in terms of service of the silvers.

3.3 Prestige

A social recognition, respect, and deference accorded individuals or groups based on their social status. A sense of respect can only be obtained depending on the social status that someone has. For the Borguisie, most of them are vying to maintain thier prestige and raise their lifestyles in order to remain a highly respected from society especially in the proletariat. Simply, they use their lifestyle or behaviour to show that they are rich people, nobles and upper class, they have a power.

Lifestyle, habit, and behaviour are living for enjoyment especially for the Borgeoisie. It is hard for leaving the pleasure that usually has been done by upper class because indirectly. It will decrease their prestige and will not want to lose preoccupations of life. The data shows the bourgeoisie use their lifestyle, habit, and behavior to show that they are the upper class:

It's a market like I've never seen, dotted with flowers and trees and fountains. The Reds are few and fast, running errands and selling their own wares, all marked by their red bands. Though the Silvers wear no band, they're easy to spot. They drip with gems and precious metals, a fortune on every one of them. One slip of a hook and I can go home with everything I'll ever need. All are tall and beautiful and cold, moving with a slow grace no Red can calm. We simply don't have time to move that way. (Aveyard, 2015:24)

4. Class Struggle

In this novel, the writer also found the reaction of lower class because of upper class oppression. The reaction is a class struggle that lower class do because they always get unfair action from the upper class. So, they want to be free from the upper class oppression or exploitation through struggle against the Silvers. As for the efforts made by the Reds to avenge the inequality and oppression of the Silvers, it was through rebellion. Starting from the formation of a rebel group called The Scarlet Guard.

"We are the Scarlet Guard and we stand for the freedom and equality of all people-
, " the woman says. I recognize her voice

Farley.

"-Starting with the Reds".

“You believe you are the masters of the world, but your reign as kings and Gods is at an end. Until you recognize us as human, as equal, the fight will be at your door. Not on a battlefield but in your cities. In your streets. In your homes. You don’t see us, and so we are everywhere”. Her voice hums with authority and poise. “And we will rise up, Red as the dawn”. (Aveyard, 2015:28)

Then this group carried out several attacks in order to get equal rights and be free from oppression by the silver people.

“Silvers of Norta, we apologize for interruption. Thirteen minutes ago there was a terrorist attack in the Capital”.

The Silvers around me gasp, bursting into fearful murmurs. I can only blink in disbelief. Terrorist attack? On the Silvers? Is that even possible?

“This is was organized bombing of government buildings in West Archeon. According to report, the Royal Court, the Treasury Hall, and Whitefire Palace have been damaged, but the court the treasury were not in session this morning”.

“A Terrorist group calling themselves the Scarlet Guard released this video moments ago”. (Aveyard, 2015:27)

CONCLUSION

This study briefly reports that social life cannot be separated from class stratification. Using *Red Queen* by Victoria Eveyard as the object of the study and Marxist theory, it takes two kind of social class portrayed in novel. The Silvers as bourgeoisie and the Reds as proletariat. The relationship between these two social classes is nothing more than a picture of ruler and servant. The bourgeoisie in this novel is known as the royals, the nobility and the rich people who are filled by the Silvers, while the proletariat is the Reds, they live to serve the Silvers, they work as servants, apprentices, and avant-garde soldiers. As Marx said that between these two classes there will be various kinds of conflicts, these conflicts arise because of inequalities or differences between them. Differences in social class can be seen from how social groups get their social status, use their privileges, and take advantage of their prestige. There are oppression in Reds people making they want to be free from the upper class oppression or exploitation through struggle against the Silvers. As for the efforts made by the Reds to avenge the inequality and oppression of the Silvers, it was through rebellion. The uprisings are portrayed epicly in this novel.

REFERENCES

- Abcarian, Richard, M. K. and P. R. (1999). *Literature: Reading and Writing the Human Experiences*. St. Martin’s Press Inc.
- Baubusse, G and Glaymann, D. (2004). *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* (2nd ed.). Westview Press.
- Berg, Bruce Lawrence, Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (8th ed.).

Danziger, K. M. (1973). *Literary Criticism*. Massachusests.

Eagleton, T. (2006). *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Taylor & Francis e-Library.

Gonçalves, D. S. (2016). A different affair from my own scant home : Marx and the issue of class in english literature. 1844, 241–252. <https://doi.org/10.4025/actascihumansoc.v38i2.30899>

Hari Murti, G., & Susanti, N. (2021). UNDERSTANDING BOURDIEU'S DISTINCTION: SOCIAL AND LITERARY CONTESTATION TO GAIN LEGITIMATE POSITION. *Anaphora: Journal of Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies*, 4(1), 48-57. <https://doi.org/10.30996/anaphora.v4i1.5268>

Hiraide, L. (2013). *Social Inequality, Aqa Gese Sociology (Unit 2)*. The BRIT School.

Jefries, V. and H. edward R. (1980). *Social Stratification*. Allyn and Bacon Inc.

Laurenson, D. and alan swingewood. (2005). *Sociology of Literature*. Granada Publlising Limit.

Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical Theory Today (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.

Wilczynski, J. (1984). *Dictionary of Marxism, Socialism and Communism*. The Macmillan Press