

Social Class Reflected In Characterization In Kevin Kwan's China Rich Girlfriend

Kadek Ayu Dewi Prastika
English Language Education
Ganesha University of Education

Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyze the social class classification reflects on plot and characterization in China Rich Girlfriend novel. This study used Marxism approach to analyze social class classification reflects on this novel. The major principle of Marxism used in this novel is class struggle. The data analysis technique used was documentation. The researcher also used library research to find some relevant sources related to this study. This study showed that there are some major characters that explained how the lower-class and the upper-class had different style in using their money and also protect their wealth. Besides, it was found that there was a revolution appeared in this novel.

Keywords: *Marxism, class struggle, alienation, and revolution.*

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisis klasifikasi kelas sosial yang mencerminkan plot dan penokohan dalam novel China Rich Girlfriend. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Marxisme untuk menganalisis klasifikasi kelas sosial yang tercermin pada novel ini. Prinsip utama Marxisme yang digunakan dalam novel ini adalah perjuangan kelas. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan adalah dokumentasi. Peneliti juga menggunakan studi pustaka untuk menemukan beberapa sumber yang relevan terkait dengan penelitian ini. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa tokoh utama yang menjelaskan bagaimana kelas bawah dan kelas atas memiliki gaya yang berbeda dalam menggunakan uang dan juga melindungi kekayaannya. Selain itu, ditemukan adanya revolusi yang muncul dalam novel ini.

Kata kunci: Marxisme, perjuangan kelas, alienasi, dan revolusi.

1. Introduction

Literature is a tool for developing ideas in written form. According to Keraf (in Adampe, 2015), literature is art that is displayed using interesting and imaginative language. Besides as a medium of entertainment or education, literature is also capable of giving social influence to society. Literary works can be of fiction or non-fiction. Fictional literary works are imaginative or unrealistic literary works. Semi (in Adampe, 2015) stated that literary works receive influence from the community and can also influence social culture in society.

The novel "China Rich Girlfriend" is a novel made by Kevin Kwam which actually belongs to the Crazy Rich Asian trilogy novel. China Rich Girlfriend is the second novel that describes ethnic Chinese life. This novel

was published in 2015. The main character in this novel is Rachel Chu, an ethnic Chinese who immigrated to America with her mother, Kerry Chu. However, there are forms of the social class gaps that are accommodated in this novel. Thus, this study focuses on forms of social class gaps through analyzing plot structure, and characters revelation using Marxism approach.

Previous studies about social classification have been conducted. Darussalam (2016) has conducted a research about social classification related to Anne Bronte novel by Agnes Grey. Darussalam (2016) argued that class classification reflected on the main character on the novel. Another study was conducted by Adampe (2015) that analyzed about the sociology review of *Detik Terakhir* novel by Alberthiene Endah. Adampe (2015) argued that the sociology review in that novel reflected on today's young people who use drugs for escapement.

However, the present study will focus on class classification reflects on the characters existed in the *China Rich Girlfriend* novel. The different between the present study with the previous studies is subject of the present study is the *China Rich Girlfriend* novel, and the object is the class classification review reflects on this novel. The characters including the major characters, namely Rachel Chu, BaoShaoyen, Eleanor Young, Carlton Bao, Collete Bing, Michele Teo and Kitty Pong. The characters analyzed are limited because these characters affect the development of the plot in the novel. However, this analysis will use a principle of the Marxism namely class struggle.

According to Bakhtin (in Goodyear, 2008) a novel takes the form of a flexible narrative by combining popular language and humor or parody so that it is close to everyday life. Novel may be lifted from events in the community, so that the novel can reflect the community's life (Goodyear, 2008). Novel belongs to fiction literary form. Darussalam (2010), novels is fiction or imaginative literary work. Based these theories it might be concluded that novel is type of literary work that contains humor close to human life. Novel is made in order to entertain the readers.

Character is who acts the story. Each character in the story has characters revelation. According to Nurgiyantoro (in Hadi, 2010), characterization is a description of the characters in a story clearly. Esten (in Hadi, 2010) stated that characterization is how the author describes and develops the characters obviously. Conclusively, characterization is how the author reveals all the character in the story clearly. Characters revelation can be analyzed through direct or indirect representation from the author. Besides, characters revelation also can be done through direct and indirect representation from other characters, indirect representation through characters' thought, speech, and action.

Marxism was first developed by Karl Max. Karl Max argues that literature is part of the socio-cultural development of society which includes religion, political science, and science (Yusria, Juanda, & Faisal, 2018). Panda (2015) mentions that a Marxism approach is an approach that connects a

work of art with society, history, culture and politics where the artwork was created. Through these two theories, it can be concluded that the Marxism approach is an approach that focuses on the relationship between literature and social aspects, such as religion or belief, politics, history, and knowledge. The view that humans are social beings will tend to cause social class differences in society.

The view of Marxism has 5 major principles, namely dialectical materialism, historical materialism, class struggle, alienation, and revolution. Dialectical materialism is a process to achieve absolute truth through a contradiction process (Darussalam, 2016). Historical materialism is a theory of Marxism which tends to emphasize social development based on economic conditions (Darussalam, 2016). According to Nurchotimas (in Darussalam: 2016) the class struggle focuses on the oppression of the upper class towards the lower classes. Basically, the class struggle focuses on how the oppressed class faces the oppressor class. Alienation focuses on how humans are alienated from their communities. Karl max said that the alienation of people is caused by their work because basic human activities are working (Darussalam, 2016). Revolution focuses on lower class rebellion for oppression from the upper class (Darussalam, 2016). Revolution will result in changes in social structure in the elimination of discrimination.

2. Methodology

This present study is descriptive qualitative. This study was conducted by using Marxism Approach. The data analysis technique used is documentation. The documentation used to find out the characterization developed by the novel. Besides, the researcher used library research to find some relevant sources related to this study. The approach used in this study is Marxism approach. The Marxism approach used to describe the social class classification reflects on China Rich Girlfriend novel.

3. Findings and Discussion

Characters Revelation

1. Rachel Chu

Rachel Chu was described as a very practical figure. This can be seen in the opinion of other figures in the following quote:

"She's much too practical - we'll never change her" (part 1, unit 10).

Other evidence that illustrates that Rachel as a proletarian is not used to getting something very luxurious is in the following quote:

"Don't it?" It's all a bit over the top of this ginous suite to the Rolls that picked us up at the airport. I feel a little embarrassed to be riding in it, don't you? "

This was stated by another character when Rachel showed a simple wedding dress. The reason Rachel chose this simple dress was because of she did not want to be bothered by the chaos of high-class

dresses. This illustrates the proletarian figure. Proletarians are generally described as simple people.

2. Eleanor Young

Eleanor was described as a cunning figure. This can be seen in the following quote:

Eleanor leaned in closer and lowered her voice "Of course! If Rachel plays her cards right, she will be a great heiress and you will benefit too!" (part 2, unit 11).

The character revelation is through an indirect presentation through spoken. Eleanor's desire to bless Nick and Rachel's marriage was not solely because of his good intentions, but Eleanor's desire to benefit from Rachel. Eleanor's character affected the plot structure when finally Nick and Rachel were married. The surprising fact that Rachel is the daughter of a mainland Chinese billionaire made her mind changed. Eleanor's figure gives an idea of what the bourgeois group looks like. Generally, bourgeois groups or upper classes will marry off their children to people who are equal so that they will improve their social status.

3. BaoShaoyen

BaoShaoyen was described as the wife of a mainland Chinese billionaire, the owner of the largest pharmaceutical industry in Shanghai, China. BaoShaoyen's character in this novel is described as an ambitious figure. This can be seen from the following novel quote:

"Don't you see?" What is it that you like it or not! By accepting your illegitimate daughter, you bring nothing but shame upon him! You do what you want to do with your own future, but I'm not going to let you know our son's!" (Chapter 2, unit 2).

Shaoyen couldn't accept Rachel's arrival because she thought it would bring disgrace to her family so she avoided the family dinner party. This illustrates how generally upper-class people always want to maintain the family's honor and their family's social status. Same is the case with Eleanor.

Shaoyen's character affected the plot structure in the novel. BaoGaoliang invited Nick and Rachel at a family dinner to introduce Rachel to her father's new family. However, when having dinner no family came. This can be seen in the quote from the novel:

"Still, for her to meet our family-your parents, Uncle Koo, your sister and her husband, and her big mouth, the word Beijing." (part 2, unit 2).

Rachel was exiled from her new family because of the assumption that her arrival would have a negative impact on the family. Moreover, Rachel's arrival will have a negative impact on her son's future.

4. Eddie Cheng

Eddie was a cousin of Nick, son of Alexander Young. The character of Eddie is arrogant. Proof that he is an arrogant character is found in the following quote:

"Now, Leo happens to be my best friend, so his father, Ming Kah-Ching, who I'm sure you've heard of, already put in a call to the hospital's chief executive to add even more pressure. The emergency medical ward, by the way, is in the Ming Kah-Ching wing. So Rachel will be treated like a VVIP from the moment she arrives," Eddie boasted (chapter 3, unit 8).

Typical of rich people in general, they like to show off what they have to show their social status.

5. Carlton Bao

Bao was a major figure who has a wasteful character. This can be seen in the following novel quote:

"Eddie has resisted the urge to roll his eyes. Typical Mainlanders! They lavished every penny on their Little Emperor and suffered in silence. Well, look where that got them. Twenty-three-year-old Carlton was supposed to be at Cambridge finishing his master's dissertation, but had a good evening doing his best Prince Harry impersonation - running a £ 38,000 bar at half a dozen London nightspots, wrecking his brand-new Ferrari, destroying public property, and almost getting himself killed " (prologue).

This character reflects how upper-class people spend their wealth. If Rachel Chu is a lower class who is good at frugality, Carlton is described as a figure who likes to waste money. The difference between the two figures is one form of the difference between the upper and lower social classes in terms of using their money.

Charlton's character affected the plot structure in which the story began with a piece of news from The London Chronicle about a severe accident between a red Ferrari 485 which hit a boutique shoe owned by Jimmy Choo on Sloane Street in the morning. It could be seen in the following quote:

Twenty-three-year-old Carlton Bao was supposed to be at Cambridge finishing his master's dissertation, but had instead spent the previous evening doing his best Prince Harry impersonation - running up a £38,000 bar tab at half a dozen London nightspots, wrecking his brand-new Ferrari, destroying public property, and almost getting himself killed (prologue).

The quote above explained that Carlton had an accident after spending a lot of his money until the next day he got an accident due to the wild race and destroyed his Ferrari sport car. Typically, this plot explained how the Mainlanders fill their life and spent their money.

Another Carlton's character was selfish. This can be seen from the quote from the novel:

"You think you know everything, don't you? You come to China for two weeks and you think you're the expert on all of us. Well, you don't know a thing! You have no idea how I really feel. You have no clue how much trouble you've caused me, caused my family!" (part 2, unit 18).

The next class struggle reflected on Carlton's character was in the part of the plot where Carlton made a confession that was very surprising to Rachel. Carlton's recognition that Rachel was not accepted by his new family is the climax of this novel. The class struggle that occurs in this plot is where Rachel is always blamed in every situation. Through this conflict, it can be concluded that the mistakes that were bestowed on Rachel because she was a newcomer to Carlton's family life were a threat to her family.

6. Collete Bing

Collete was described as a wasteful character. This can be seen in the following novel excerpt:

"The girls were like a plague of locusts, descending on every boutique and decimating everything in sight, while Colette breathlessly posted every purchase on social media. Swept up in all the excitement, I made my first high-fashion purchase - a pair of beautifully tailored navy slacks I found on the sale rack at Chloe that will go with everything" (part 2, part 16).

She told as a person who likes to show off what she has on her social media. The difference in social class seen here is that Chinese rich people really like to show off. They like publicity to show their social status. The mainland Chinese people do like publicity compared to Chinese immigrants who prefer to save money.

Another Collete's character was arrogant. It could be seen in the following quote:

"You've been looking at me from day one, and you've been plotting to get away from me and away from his family. This works out is perfectly for you, doesn't it? You want their money all to yourself. Well you can have their pathetic one-five billion dollars for all I care about nothing compared to what my family has. You're never in your life going to come close to touching me! All the money in the world is never going to buy or taste because you'll always be common. You're nothing but a common little bastard!" (part 3, unit 16).

This part explained Collete Bing berateed Rachel Chu. The oppression carried out by Collete gave the impression that no one from the lower class could come to terms with it. The emphasis here was that

Rachel did not become anything compared to Collete because she was from the upper class that had no anything.

The arrogant character reflected on Collete affected to the plot development. Rachel Chu poisoned by Roxame, Collete's personal assistant. This can be seen in the novel quote:

"I have no idea where they took her. She just disappeared! We were frantically searching for everywhere - I had people in Shanghai, Beijing, all the top regional hospitals looking for her. But we have to wait till her admission record popped up somewhere. It was never the intention to get things as bad as they did. I just made her and make her leave the country. The plan goes terribly wrong (part 3, unit 14)."

The social class gap that occurred here was class struggle I which the lower class was oppressed by the upper class. The motive for poisoning Rachel is to make Rachel deter and leave China. Rachel becomes a figure who is considered a disaster for Collete and Carlton's relationship because Rachel's arrival can make Carlton lose his inheritance.

Collete's character affected to the plot structure. The plot in the following quote:

"You're nothing more than a spoiled, titled little shit. And like you, I'm proud of my roots - I'm not talking about my birth father, I'm talking about the honest, hardworking mother who raised me, and the amazing family that supported her. You sit in your perfect little eco-luxury bubble, while your father's companies are the biggest polluters in China" (part 3, unit 16).

Furthermore, the class classification reflected in this plot was revolution. Revolution is a process in which the convicted party conducts a rebellion against the oppressor (Darussalam, 2016). Rachel's resistance received a positive response to the community and contained in newspapers all over the world. The resistance carried out by Rachel was in the spotlight of the world and became an encouragement to Chinese non-billionaires.

7. Michele teo

Michele Teo is the husband of Astrid, cousin of Nick Young. In this novel, Michele experienced a very shocking experience. He became a successful and wealthy businessman. However, Michele turned into an arrogant and publicity character. This is contained in the following novel excerpt: *"Maybe it's all the gold. It looks a bit right chia * to me. You can't swap it out for diamonds or something?" (part 2, unit 9).*

This showed that someone's work will affect a person's social class. Like Karl Max's theory which explains that economic factors will affect the social class of society. Changes that happened to Michele can be seen from the news contained in a magazine that reviewed Michele

Teo's life with all his success as a successful businessman. Michele also became a fashionable character.

8. Kitty Pong/Mrs Bernard Tai

Kitty Pong is described as a person who likes publicity. This can be seen in the conversation between Kitty and Corina:

"So you will improve my image? You are going to help change Hong Kong's perception of me?"

"Mrs. Tai, I am going to change your life."

After marrying Bernard, Kitty wanted to improve her social class and cover her past, one of which was to buy an ancient Chinese painting scroll at a very expensive price. By buying this painting, she hoped she would be accepted and viewed by the upper class as a high-class art collector. In addition, she also hired a consultant named CorinaKotung to change her lifestyle, ranging from clothing, jewelry, food, makeup, transportation, and also reading that could be read in order to gain popularity among the upper class.

4. Conclusion

The China Rich Girlfriend is a novel made by Kevin Kwan and published in 2015. There are some major characters analyzed in this novel. Those major characters are Rachel Chu, BaoShaoyen, Carlton Bao, Eleanor Young, Collete Bing, Kitty Pong, Eddie Cheng, and Michele Teo. Rachel Chu is a very practical person. Eleanor was described as a cunning figure. BaoShaoyen is an ambitious character. Eddie is arrogant character. Carlton is wasteful and selfish character. Collete is wasteful and arrogant person. Michele and Kitty is arrogant characters.

The novel told the story of how the social class system was compiled in this novel. In accordance with the major principles in the Marxism approach, this novel contains classstruggle. The class struggle reflects on the characterization in those major characters. The class struggle filled in this novel is the different between the high-class and lower-class in using their money. It could be seen in the Carlton and Collete's characters. As billionaire of Mainlanders, they thoroughly don't hesitate to waste their money and show it to the public. Differently, Rachel Chu as a proletariat Chinese-immigrant described as a very practical and economical person.

Class struggle that happened in this novel has an impact on the protest between the lower-class to the upper-class. This event triggered a revolution. Revolution that happened in this novel is when Rachel Chu was reviled by Collete. Rachel tried to fight and maintain her pride. Her action became motivation for non-Chinese billionaire. Besides, the class social reflects in this novel is how the rich people maintain and strengthen their wealth and also protect their rights.

References

- Adampe, R. Y. (2015). Tinjauan Sosiologis Terhadap Novel Detik Terakhir Karya Karya Alberthiene Endah.
- Darussalam, R. Y. (2016). Social Classification Reflected in Anne Bronte's Agnes Grey (1847): Marxist Theory .
- Goodyer, M. G. (2008, April). Literary Theory, The Novel and Science Media.
- Kwam, K. (2015). *China Rich Girlfriend*. Doubleday.
- Panda, A. K. (2015). Marxist Approach to Literature: an Introduction. *Journal of Teaching and Research In English Literature , Vi*.
- Taufic Hadi, M. E. (2010). Analisis Novel Laskar Pelangi Karya Andrea Hirata (Tinjauan Sosiologi Sastra).
- Yusria, Juanda, & Faisal. (2018). Pertentangan Kelas dalam Novel Rima Rima Tiga Jiwa Karya.