

COMMODIFICATION BY BOURGEOISIE CLASS AS SEEN IN  
JOHN STEINBECK'S THE PEARL: A MARXIST STUDY

A Thesis



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## ABSTRAK

Penulis dalam penelitian ini membedah tentang sejenis aksi dalam bidang ekonomi yang dalam kajian Marxisme dikenal dengan istilah komodifikasi yang merupakan salah satu dampak dari sistim kapitalisme di Meksiko pada tahun 1930an. Tahun 1930 masih dipengaruhi oleh periode realisme dimana para penulis lebih cenderung terbuka dan blak-blakan dalam merefleksikan keadaan dan situasi yang sebenarnya ke dalam karya sastra, salah satunya di bidang ekonomi. Dalam hal ini, penulis lebih memfokuskan analisa dalam sudut pandang Marxisme dengan membahas komodifikasi (tindakan menilai suatu barang bahkan manusia berdasarkan nilai tukar yang dimilikinya) yang dilakukan oleh kaum borjuis terhadap kaum proletar (pekerja) yang terefleksi di dalam novel The Pearl karya John Steinbeck.

Penulis menggunakan metode kepustakaan dengan mengumpulkan informasi dan data dari berbagai buku dan jurnal. Analisa penulisan tesis ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang diuraikan secara deskriptif. Dalam menganalisa dampak kapitalisme di dalam novel, penulis menggunakan pendekatan kritik sastra Marxisme dengan memakai terminologi komodifikasi.

Akhirnya penulis menemukan adanya hal hal terselubung dibalik proses komodifikasi yang memberikan dampak negatif terhadap kaum proletar, dalam hal ini masyarakat Indian. Hal hal tersebut adalah determinasi ekonomi dan ideologi kapitalis . Kedua hal ini memacu tindakan komodifikasi dan menyebabkan adanya pemujaan terhadap komoditi secara berlebihan. Selain itu, kaum proletar sebagai kaum tertindas sebagaimana yang terefleksikan di dalam novel hanya bisa menyerah pada keadaan ketidakadilan dalam masyarakat yang mereka alami dibawah kekuasaan kaum borjuis.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Background of the Research

The existence of economic determinism in twentieth century America triggers further impacts in the society, like the development of capitalistic ideologies. Such an ideology influences Mexican social values, and therefore this matter results ideology which leads *commodification* (a condition by which all things in society (even people) regarded as commodity) and commodity fetishism (a worship to commodity which posses an exchange value as its soul). All these capitalistic aspects really corrupt the Mexican society, therefore, I conduct this research because all of these capitalistic aspects are really absurd or vague and hard to decipher. These matters are intricate problems actually, and this research is intended to reveal all those vague capitalistic aspects.

The Pearl by John Steinbeck is the novel that I choose in conducting this research. I choose this novel because it has various aspects of economic determinism, capitalistic ideology, and other capitalistic aspects that are very appropriate to analyze by means of Marxist Literary Approach. Therefore, this literary work is very appropriate for this research. The Pearl by John Steinbeck tells about the hard life of an Indian man named Kino with his little family. He, his wife and his little son live in

poverty until he finds a big pearl in the sea. He and his family put a big expectation toward the pearl. Unfortunately, the pearl just brings a trouble for him. Some characters as the representation of bourgeoisie class try to get the pearl from him.

Every research in social and human science is responsible to enlighten the society. The core benefit of this research is to meet this responsibility; to enlighten our society from the corrupt effects of capitalistic aspects, and of course, to enrich the world of literary criticism.

In conducting this research, I use one of Marxist's term which is *commodification*. The goal of *commodification* is to keep and even to raise your position in your society financially or socially, because *commodification* is the acts of relating to objects or persons in terms of their exchange value or sign-exchange value. In this novel, I see some aspects that covered behind *commodification* process, to uncover this problem, I conduct this research. Concerning the benefit of this research is to illuminate society about the influence of socio economic condition which is represented in the novel.

## 1.2 Identification of the Problem

*Commodification* is the major problem to investigate in this research; this matter is concerned with various strategic purposes behind it. Economic determinism and capitalistic ideology are the core aspects which lead *commodification*. Furthermore, commodity fetishism is the estuary of this process.

### 1.3 Research Question:

1. What makes the bourgeoisie class doing *commodification* toward proletariat (Indian Native America) in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*?
2. How does bourgeoisie class do *commodification* in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*?
3. What are the impacts of *commodification* toward proletariat in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*?

### 1.4 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on *commodification* as one of the effects of economic determinism as seen in the novel. Here I focus on bourgeoisie class who do *commodification* toward their environments in order to defend and raise their position in their society. In this research I do not analyze various aspects of reification, because this aspect is really extensive, because of that, I prefer to relate my analysis about *commodification* with economic determinism and capitalistic ideology.

### 1.5 Objective of the Research

This study is aimed at investigating the *commodification* in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, in order to reveal the impacts of *commodification* done by bourgeoisie class toward proletariat in the novel.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Since the coming of European to America, the harmony life of Native America was disturbed. The Whites never want to make a good relationship with Indians. They treated Indian unworthy. This condition created a gap between Whites and Indians. They are not equal each other socially, politically, educationally and economically.

Besides that, capitalism also took a big influence toward Native American socioeconomic life, and of course, this condition can not separate from the historical background of this country. The bourgeoisie as the ruling class or 'the haves' people take a big controlled in American social life, especially in economic aspects. On the other hand, the proletariat or 'the haves not' people, in this case is Native America, have no power to against this capitalist systems.

After conducting the research and analyzing John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* by using Marxist Literary Criticism, I conclude that, this novel is the representation of the real social and historical condition of twentieth century America, when there was an inequality between Europeans and Indians as the native people and also the period

when capitalism was mushroomed. This novel can be a source of inspiration for society to understand deeply about the phenomena which often happen.

Steinbeck as a realist writer, show clearly about how economic determinism was happen in early twentieth century Mexico. The economic determinism, build some ideologies which Marx regard as a 'false consciousness' in both Indian and Whites society. These capitalist system process (economic determinism and ideology) appearing *commodification* as a condition by which all things in society (even people) regarded as commodities that have exchange value and sign exchange value that reflected in John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. Some persons who represent as bourgeoisie class do *commodification* in order to get a high status in society. Commodity fetishism is the estuary of those acts that reflect in proletariat class in the novel.

Furthermore, proletariat as the representation of working class, in this case is Indian, cannot do anything to against these capitalist systems. In this novel, they just can give up and cannot do anything; they do realize that they are always controlled by bourgeoisie. This is proven by Kino's failure in achieving his great future if he is selling the pearl.

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