

**THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF SLAVERY AS REFLECTED  
IN MARK TWAIN'S *ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN* AS  
*CRITICISM TOWARD CAPITALISM***

**A Thesis**

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## ABSTRAK

Dalam penelitian ini penulis membahas novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* karya Mark Twain. Penulis membahas bagaimana karya ini merefleksikan perbudakan pada abad ke-19 di Amerika secara kritis. Pada zaman perbudakan yang mengikuti sistem kapitalisme ini, terdapat kelas berkuasa yaitu masyarakat kulit putih yang sangat mengeksploitasi dan menekan masyarakat kulit hitam yang dijadikan budak demi mendapatkan keuntungan.

Dalam menganalisa novel tersebut, penulis menerapkan teori Refleksi dari George Lukacs, untuk melihat novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* sebagai refleksi kenyataan terhadap keadaan sosial-ekonomi masyarakat, khususnya melihat konflik sosial pada zamannya. Konflik sosial yang muncul melihat sisi negatif kapitalisme yang terefleksi didalam teks. Berdasarkan teori Refleksi dari Lukacs, novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* yang merupakan karya realis dapat memperlihatkan dan mengkritik sistem kapitalisme terhadap kehidupan perbudakan pada abad 19 di Amerika.

Hasil dari analisa terhadap novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, penulis berhasil menarik kesimpulan bahwa novel ini merupakan refleksi keadaan sosial-ekonomi masyarakat akibat sistem kapitalisme yang berkembang di Amerika pada abad 19. Dalam novel ini terdapat beberapa kritikan atau sisi negatif kapitalisme terhadap zaman perbudakan yang direfleksikan melalui karakter budak kulit hitam. Sistem kapitalisme menghilangkan sisi-sisi atau aspek-aspek kemanusiaan dari budak dan menjadikan mereka seolah olah bukan manusia melainkan hanya sekedar komoditas untuk diperdagangkan. Selain itu mereka juga mendapat perlakuan kasar dari kelas yang berkuasa dan mereka terasing dari hidupnya karena mereka merupakan alat yang bekerja untuk kepentingan serta keuntungan kapitalis.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Background of the Research

Since 1654 to 1865, the slavery system was legal in United States, especially in South America. In slavery system, slave was treated as the property by the owner (ruling class). Slavery condition was triggered by the social lameness between ruling class and lower class.

Slavery in America still becomes an interesting topic that can be discussed in literary works today. Mark Twain's novel is one of literary work that describes about the socio-economic condition in his era. He writes about the condition of slavery in 19<sup>th</sup> century America. He is included one of the best American writers in 19<sup>th</sup> century who reflect the slavery in his great novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Marxist criticism is compatible approach to analyze about slavery in Twain's novel because it is regarded as an approach that reveals the relationship between literature and socio-economic condition. Twain's novel shows slave's condition in their relation with the society based on economic system. Twain's novel as realist work, significantly not only reflect the socio-economic condition under capitalism but also the contradiction which is built in that era. In his novel, Twain shows the lower class (slaves) who get oppression and exploitation under capitalism.

Moreover, slavery constituted capitalism. According to Dorothea Drummond Mbalia's statement in Booker's book entitled *A Practical Introduction to Literary*

*Theory and Criticism* that, "Slavery and capitalism are intimately related as historical phenomena" (1996: 298). In Marxist perspective, the social oppositions on which slavery is found seem to be based on race. The different between white race and black race in society create racism. In Booker's book, Nkrumah also states that, "Race inextricably linked with class exploitation; in a racist-capitalist power structure, capitalist and race oppression are complementary, the removal of one ensures the removal of the other" (1996: 298). White race claims that black race is inferior and takes them as worker. It is a form of oppression under capitalism. It is supported by Booker's statement that, "Racism involves the overt oppression of one group in society for the economic benefit of another, so slavery and capitalism are related structurally, if in no other way" (1996: 298). In other words, the end of capitalism necessary the end of racism.

In the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain uses slave character as the victim of slavery. Jim as slave character faces so many conflict in his life because he gets oppression from the ruling class (in this case the owners) as the impact capitalism in America at 19<sup>th</sup> century. The owners have a power to do anything toward their slaves. It means that, these two different classes are the impact of the capitalist system reflected in the novel. This matter is the core problem to investigate through this research.

In this case, this research is conducted because the impacts of capitalist system toward the slavery in every aspects of life are still vague, absurd and hard to decipher. In order to reveal those matters in the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry*

*Finn*, a Marxist criticism is needed. Moreover, the writer chooses Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as the object of this research because this novel reflects the real of slavery condition in 19<sup>th</sup> century America as critique capitalism. Therefore this novel is very appropriate for this research. That is why the writer entitles this research with *The Socio-Economic Condition of Slavery as Reflected In Mark Twain's Adventures Huckleberry Finn as Criticism toward Capitalism*.

### **1.2 The Identification of the Problem**

There are hints of the process of dehumanization of black people as slaves in 19<sup>th</sup> century America reflected in Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, nevertheless these aspects are still absurd, difficult to interpret, and hard to decipher. The process of dehumanization is caused by economic system under capitalism. Therefore a Marxist criticism is needed to reveal these problems. In this research, the writer sees the negative side of slavery under capitalism in 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

### **1.3 The Scope of the Research**

This research focuses on two main points. The first is the real condition which is concerned with slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in America. Second is the reflection of slavery in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, in the novel including the process of dehumanization done to the slaves as criticism toward capitalism. These two aspects are framed merely based on Lukacs's theory of reflection, so this research does not involve other theories of Marxism.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Through character of slave in the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Jim shows the reflection the slavery in 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pre Civil—War) under the economic system of capitalism. By seeing Jim's character, the writer reveals the contradiction of slavery which is still absurd and hard to decipher in the novel.

The writer finds a critique toward capitalism which is appeared in a realist novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It is proved by Lukacs' Reflection Theory that views a realist work do not only reflect the socio-economic condition but also criticizes it. The critique can be seen from the economic system which is influenced by ideology capitalism. In the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the writer finds the ideology capitalism which breaks slave's life. In the novel, Twain shows how the people at the top of the social scale are naturally superior to those below them. Jim as a slave character succeeds to reflect how the slavery is a form of oppression and exploitation of the ruling class toward slave's life.

The contradiction which is found in Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* refers to the process dehumanization of slave. First, the economic system under capitalism regards Jim not as human being but as commodity which can be traded in the market place. The ruling class treat Jim as commodity just merely for get much money. Second is the alienation of slave. Jim is alienated from his species because he cannot refuse his condition which is separated from his family. He is separated each

others because the ruling class sells his wife and children into different owner who needs the slaves. Besides, is alienated from productive activity. Slaves are forced for working much harder and long hours per day. They do not enjoy with their work because the ruling class forces them to work. In this case, they work for give a profit for the ruling class or their owner. Third, brutal treatments by the ruling class toward slave. Jim receives brutal treatments from the ruling class because Jim is their property. They treat Jim like an animal.

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