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ABSTRACT

Black Beauty is the famous classical English novel written by Anna Sewell which was published in 1877. It is considered as the first popular novel that is narrated by animals and also believed to be the pioneer of the genre. Set in the era the work was written, Black Beauty reveals the dark side of living things commodification in the socio-economic system of late 19th century England. It depicts forms of living things commodification in society and the effects the living things experienced due to the practice, including alienation. This study sees the work as the reflection of late 19th century England, the era in which the work was written. Conducted using the Marxist approach, this study examines the portrayal of living things commodification and the representation of Karl Marx's alienation in the story. The research shows that living things commodification that took place in late 19th century England can be seen from the depiction of the acts of breeding, marketing, and transaction of horses. Moreover, it can also be seen through the depiction of living things being valued merely for their appearance and regarded as means of fashion. Meanwhile, the representation of alienation in the story can be seen in the situation of Earlshall Park and the Crimean War, the practice of convenience surgery, and the death of the characters Seedy Sam and Ginger.

Keywords: alienation, commodification, late 19th century England, Karl Marx

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INTISARI

Black Beauty adalah novel Inggris klasik terkenal yang ditulis oleh Anna Sewell yang diterbitkan pada tahun 1877. Novel ini dianggap sebagai novel populer pertama yang dinarasikan oleh hewan dan juga diyakini sebagai pelopor genre tersebut. Berlatar tempat di Inggris dengan waktu yang sama saat karya itu ditulis, Black Beauty mengungkap sisi gelap komodifikasi makhluk hidup dalam sistem sosial ekonomi Inggris akhir abad ke-19. Karya ini menggambarkan bentuk komodifikasi makhluk hidup dalam masyarakat dan dampak yang dialami makhluk hidup akibat praktik tersebut, termasuk alienasi. Studi ini melihat karya tersebut sebagai cerminan dari akhir abad ke-19 Inggris, era di mana karya tersebut ditulis. Dilakukan dengan pendekatan Marxis, penelitian ini mengkaji penggambaran komodifikasi makhluk hidup dan representasi teori alienasi oleh Karl Marx dalam novel Black Beauty. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komodifikasi makhluk hidup yang terjadi pada akhir abad ke-19 di Inggris dapat dilihat dari penggambaran kegiatan pembiakan, pemasaran, dan transaksi kuda. Selain itu, juga dapat dilihat melalui penggambaran makhluk hidup yang dihargai semata-mata karena penampilannya dan dianggap sebagai alat fashion. Sedangkan representasi alienasi dalam cerita dapat dilihat pada situasi Earlshall Park dan Crimean War, praktek operasi kenyamanan, serta kematian karakter Seedy Sam dan Ginger

Kata kunci: alienasi, komodifikasi, Inggris akhir abad 19, Karl Marx

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Choosing the Subject

Black Beauty is the famous English anthropomorphic novel written by Anna Sewell which was published in 1877. It is considered as the first popular novel that is narrated by animals and also believed to be the pioneer of the genre. In *Why Anthropomorphism in Children's Literature*, Markowsky confirmed that not until Black Beauty was written by Anna Sewell did the genre of animal stories revive. Black Beauty is now one of the best-selling novels of all time with more than 50 million copies sold since it was first published. It has also been adapted into films and TV series. Black Beauty has become a legacy that is influential in the world of animal ethics. In America, where it was marketed as "The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse," more than one million copies were circulated by 1891. Copies were distributed widely to drivers and cabmen, (to promote gentle treatment to horses) as well as to schools, where Black Beauty began its career as a children's book (Guest, 2011). "Beauty was the impetus for some significant, lasting, and positive effects for animal welfare, which should not be overlooked." (Poirier, Carden, McIlroy, & Moran, 2019, p. 13). Eventually, it promotes a world with kindness and compassion. Because respect for animals would lead to a more empathetic human society.

Black Beauty has been regarded as a classic novel and often classified as a children's literature due to the use of anthropomorphic animals in the story.

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Anthropomorphism is widely used in children's literature in order to make moral stories further interesting, gripping, and educative (Dhantal, 2018). However, despite the use of anthropomorphism as a dominant literary device in the novel that makes it often categorized as children's literature, Black Beauty was a story full of social criticism toward the society at the time the author lived. Anna Sewell herself claimed that her work is intended for adults with the purpose to "induce kindness, sympathy, and an understanding treatment of horses" (Lennon, 2017).

Set in the era the work was written, the story mentioned several historical events such as the Crimean War and also places such as the city of London. Black Beauty reveals the dark side, the effects on the socioeconomic system of late 19th century England and how the living things commodification happens in society through those historical events and places.. It also depicted how living things as commodities became the most vulnerable victims to the damaging effects such as maltreatment and alienation. As an autobiography of a horse, the story was narrated by Black Beauty himself, a horse that also became the victim of the system in which he was regarded as a commodity. In his early life, the story of abuse and exploitation are just fairy tales Black Beauty heard from his horse friends in Birtwick Park. There, he met other horses and heard their stories about how they are downgraded as means for fashion and had to suffer the use of check-rein and the practice of surgery for convenience.

Not until Black Beauty was being handed to a wealthy upper-class Lord W------ that he finally experienced being a commodity for fashion and valued merely from his physical appearance. To fulfill Lord W--------'s wife 's obsession with

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fashion, Black Beauty had to use check-rein, a popular harnessing device which held the horse's head tightly erect, compelling the animal into contrived and painful postures for the purpose of appearances (Dorre 157). Then as his life went on, he got to experience all kinds; being owned by a master of the livery stable and got the experience of being driven by all kinds of drivers and even being owned by a cab driver and became a cab-horse. At last, he met Joe Green, a former stable boy who has met Black Beauty in his early life in Birtwick Park. Then he bought Black Beauty, promised never to sell him again and that's how his life ended. Black Beauty also witnessed how humans treated other living things unfairly for the sake of business and money, neglecting the sentiment value. Anna Sewell in the story uses the animal and human characters to represent the alienated workers as the victim of the socio-economic system that runs in the era.

The depiction of living things commodification and alienation as one of the damaging effects it causes drew my interest and it eventually encouraged me to conduct this study. The finding that most studies about Black Beauty mostly overlooking the depiction of human commodification is also encouraging me to conduct the study. I believe that there should be more discussion on the depiction of living things commodification, especially of humans in the working class. Regarding the main interest of the novel, I found that Marxist criticism is the most suitable tool in reading the novel within the context as it covers commodification as well as its damaging effect, alienation. Alienation as the effect of class structured society and capitalistic economic system is implied and represented in the story

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through some characters' experience. The discussion on this representation will also be presented in the study.

1.2. Research Questions

As implied in the background of choosing the subject, these research questions are proposed in this study are:

1. How are living things commodification in late 19th century England portrayed in the story?
2. How is the phenomenon of worker alienation represented in the story?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

To answer the proposed question above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find the portrayal of living things commodification in the story
2. To find out the representation of alienation in the story

This study uses the Marxist approach in the discussion. The term commodification and alienation refers to those proposed by the theorist Karl Marx. Through a quick Marxist reading of the novel, it is found that living things commodification of late 19th century English society is portrayed through the act of breeding and transaction of horses, and the use of humans and animals as accessories. Meanwhile, the representation of alienation is represented through the situation of war and the working environment at some places, the practice of convenience surgery, and the death of some characters.

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1.4. Focus and Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is the depiction of living things commodification in the story and the representation of its damaging effects which is alienation. The term living things refers to any human and animal characters being commodified in the story. The scope of this study is the intrinsic elements of the novel and will also cover the extrinsic elements which are the socio-economic condition of late 19th century England, and the history of horse functions in the society. As the study is conducted using the Marxist approach, Marx's definition of commodification and his theory of alienation are also in the scope of the study.

1.5. Literature Review

This study is conducted using the Marxist approach, not only reading the primary sources of the theory which is Karl Marx's Economic & Philosophic Manuscript of 1844, but I also gain a better understanding by reading other sources such as Remus Racolta's dissertation entitled *Alienation and Hybridity. Patterns of Estrangement in the British Novel since the 1950s* (2017). The paper deals with the concepts of alienation and hybridity and their possible overlappings. He analyzes the phenomena of both Alienation and Hybridity that are depicted in English literary works from the 1950s until post-2000. The subchapter that explained the definition, meanings, and concepts of alienation among theorists and philosophers contributed to my decision to choose Karl Marx's theory of alienation for this present study. He included an overview of Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and Fromm's view of alienation which I include in my discussion on theories of alienation. I also gain a better understanding by reading the article Comparison Between Marx and

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Marcuse's Alienation Theories (2015). The article was written by Juan and Daojin and retrieved from the Cross-Cultural Communication journal and it included a brief summary on Karl Marx's theory of alienation and highlighted points in the theory.

Regarding my primary source, the novel Black Beauty, there have been many works that analyzed it, especially in terms of abuse, exploitation, or cruel treatment. In English Studies Program Universitas Gadjah Mada alone, there are two graduating papers found with Black Beauty as the subject. The first one is Maltreatment of Horses as seen in Anna Sewell's Black Beauty written by Rahmat Fetriyanto in 2012 and the other one was Black Beauty's Character Development Based on Anna Sewell's Black Beauty written by Muhammad Alfi Syahrin in 2016. The discussion on the former graduating paper contributes some insights for me. In the paper, the writer identifies kinds of mistreatment to horses in an objective approach which latter classified into different kinds. The result shows that there are various kinds of horse maltreatment in the novel, consisting of maltreatments at the breaking in, the use of bearing rein, cutting the horsetails, the use of the whip, the use of blinkers, the tight-rein driving, the broken-down horses, the loose-rein driving, and the steam-engine style of driving. Fetriyanto's paper helps to enrich my understanding of maltreatment and the exploitation of horses. Even though this paper does not include the relation of the exploitation and maltreatment suffered by the character with its commodification, it enriches my knowledge of unfair treatment experienced by the characters.

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Another work that helps to enrich the information on maltreatment and exploitation of animals specifically horses seen in the novel is a journal issued in UNHAS ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Studies Volume 1 Issue 3, 2018. It is entitled The Depiction of Slavery Through Animal Treatment in Sewell's Black Beauty in Relation to Living with Environment. The research was conducted by Sri Wahyuni and Sudarmin Harun through a descriptive qualitative method by applying the Sociological Approach. It carried out the result that human treatment to horses is considered slavery for violating laws on animal protection. Horses are created to work but also there are rules in using them. There were four animal Anti-Cruelty laws in 1867 that existed in the novel. Those laws are penalties for overdriving cruelly treating animals, for impounding animals without giving sufficient food and water, the penalty for carrying animals in a cruel manner, and the penalty for abandoning infirm animals in public places. This article helped me to understand better the historical background of the novel as well as to get more depictions of animal commodification as the article also presents animals as commodities therefore the relation of human characters and animals in the story is regarded as slavery.

The most recent critics article found online was Straight from the Horse's Mouth: Fauna-criticism and Black Beauty published in Animalia Journal in May 2019. Written by Nathan Poirier, Rebecca Carden, Hilary Mcilroy, and Courtney Moran, the paper employed fauna-criticism to critically assess some of the major literary features of Black Beauty and the degree of effectiveness to which they articulated the animal standpoint. The article contributed to me a better

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understanding of anthropomorphism and its significance in making the notable work by Anna Sewell contributed towards better treatment of animals that are in close contact with humans.

There are also several studies that analyze Black Beauty as a representation of Victorian society in which it is a class structured society. Some of them also contained information about how horses are viewed and functioned in society. These two articles obtained from Victorian Literature and Culture journal entitled *Horses and Corsets: "Black Beauty," Dress Reform, and the Fashioning of the Victorian Woman* and *Horse-Sense: Understanding the Working Horse in Victorian London*. The former was written by Gina Marlene Dorré and published in 2002 and the latter article was written by Kathryn Miele. Both are published by Cambridge University Press. The articles explain the trending fashion in Victorian society and how the people generally valued it as a mark of social status. Horses and all the attributes attached to its body are part of fashion statement and pride. It is implied in the article that animals, especially horses are not only used as a means of transportation but also as a clue to someone's social status. The later article described how the working horses in Victorian London often suffered because of they're exploited by the cab owner or they were mistreated due to the owner's ignorance. The article also discusses the historical events happening in the late 19th century English society.

Articles, journals, and books mentioned above are some of the sources that I found to be the most useful in helping me to enrich my understanding on the theme of the novel Black Beauty and its historical background, as well as the

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understanding of the theory and approach I use in this paper. This paper will focus on the commodification of living things portrayed in the story and how it eventually leads to alienation which is also represented in the story.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

As for Marxism, literature, like all cultural manifestations, is a product of the socioeconomic and hence ideological conditions of the time and place in which it was written, whether or not the author intended it so (Tyson 66). Black Beauty, a fictional work set in the late 19th century, the era it was written, is reflecting the life of English society at that time. Through that reflection, Anna Sewell criticized the society by representing the living thing commodifications happen in society and its damaging effects it brings such as alienation. Her message values are somewhat similar to those stated by Karl Marx through his works which concern the effects of the rising industrialism and capitalistic economic system which he observed happening in the late 19th century. Due to that similar historical background, I think the Marxist approach will be the most appropriate way to trigger favorable discussions on Anna Sewell's Black Beauty, especially on the representation of living things commodification and alienation in the novel. Therefore, the definition of the term commodification throughout this study is based on Marxism meanwhile the theory used in examining the representation of alienation in the story is Karl Marx's theory of alienation.

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1.6.1. Commodification in Marxism

The term of commodification used in this study will be the one that is known in Marxism, the one that is originally discussed by Karl Marx in his notable work *Capital*. Besides the fact that both Karl Marx and Anna Sewell's work has similar historical background, the term commodification in Marxism is also used because as confirmed by Oliver & Robinson in their article *Rationalizing Inconsistent Definitions of Commodification* (2017), the core idea of commodification itself was originated from Karl Marx's idea (p. 1315). In that article which discussed and rationalized the inconsistent definitions of commodification, they also regarded Marx's view as the leader in defining and emphasizing the definition of others (p. 1325).

But before we learn what commodification means in Marxism, it is important to learn what is meant by commodity. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the commodity is defined as *an economic good,* and *something useful or valued.* Meanwhile, in his book *Capital Volume 1* (1867) where Karl Marx talked about commodities the whole book, he began with a passage explaining that a commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us which its properties can satisfy our wants (41). He implied that regardless of how the object meets and satisfies our wants and whether our wants are bare necessities to keep us alive or they are just fanciness, the object is considered a commodity nonetheless. In short, everything that is useful to us can be considered as a commodity. Further, he implied that commodities are characterized by its *use-value* and *exchange value.* However, Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* stated that Marxists believe that in a

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capitalist system, the value of a commodity is not determined only by its *use-value* but it is also determined by its *exchange value* or *sign-exchange value*, meaning that its value depends more on money or commodities which it can be traded or the social status it confers on its owner (62).

One of the critics claimed that commodities are also characterized by sign-value is Baudrillard. He stated that the sign value -the expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power, and so on- becomes an increasingly important part or an essential constituent of the commodity and consumption in the consumer society (Goldman & Papson 1996). Kellner in his article *Jean Baudrillard* (2019) concluded that for Baudrillard, the entire society is organized around consumption and display of commodities through which individuals gain prestige, identity, and standing. In this system, the more prestigious one's commodities (houses, cars, clothes, and so on), the higher one's standing in the realm of sign value. If somebody has a bag, we know its use-value lies in its ability to help the person carry things. But instead of focusing only on that use-value, in a consumer society, a person will value it by relating how much money it costs (*exchange value*) or how the brands or material of the bag show his social status and helps him impress his friends (*sign-exchange value*). The person's act of relating his bag in terms of its price or how it shapes others perception of him is what we know in Marxism as *commodification.* This is in accordance with Tyson statement still in his book *Critical Theory Today, "Commodification* is the act of relating to objects or persons in terms of their exchange value or sign-exchange value" (p. 62).