

Social Class in Victoria Aveyard's Red Queen

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Social Class in Victoria Aveyard's *Red Queen*

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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. The red people desire to be free of the silver because of the unfairness and persecution they have endured. 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

Stratification and social life are inextricably linked. The word "stratification" refers to divisions inside an object and is derived from the concept of strata. In society, social stratification is a multi-layered system. 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.

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.

Marx asserts that society as a whole is divided into two enormously antagonistic camps or into two enormously opposing classes, the 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 creative expression of the human spirit, literature aims to describe and explain the reality that exists in the world. In many respects, literature captures the human experience. The literary work, including the novel, contains insightful lessons about life that readers can use. A novel, according to Danziger, is a work of literature that makes an effort to represent the universe in which we live and seeks to impart a specific value because there are so many lessons to be learned 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. This work was chosen by the researcher because it depicts the societal situation about the social class issue. To learn more about the socioeconomic circumstances in the work, the researcher adopted a sociological perspective. Furthermore, the author classified a type of social class using Karl Marx's theory.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative methodology. In qualitative research, people's interactions are observed and descriptive data is produced in the form of speech or writing. The goal of qualitative research is to comprehend something that is not predetermined but rather discovered after examining the social reality that is the subject of the study. This type of the research refers to the meaning, concept, 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. The theory of sociology of literature examines the relationships between the writer and their socioeconomic classes, social standing, ideologies, the state of the economy in their line of work, and the readers. The sociology of literature and Karl Marx's ideas are closely related. Marx argues that because literature is tied to the social classes that exist, it and all other cultural phenomena reflect patterns of economic relations. Because of this, only when literary works are connected to these relationships can they be understood (Laurenson, 2005).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There is class division which divides the members of the society into two main classes. The upper class is the bourgeoisie and the lower class is known as the proletariat or workers.

3.1 Bourgeoisie

The Bourgeoisie or upper class is the first class in society. 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:

¹³ 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.

3.2 Proletariat

The proletariat or lower class are those who work for the upper class. They have neither social nor economic status. They did not receive the education that would allow them to lead a decent life. The proletariat or low class in the novel is the Red Blood clan. It can be proven at data:

¹⁷ "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 ¹² 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.

3.3 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.

3.3.1 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:

⁴ “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 laborer⁵”. 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.

3.3.2 Privilege

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

²⁵ 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.

3.3.3 Prestige

Social identity is respect and esteem for individuals or groups based on their social status. A sense of respect can only be achieved according to that social status. As for the bourgeoisie most of them try to protect their honor and improve their lifestyle in order to be respectable in the proletarian society. Simply, they use their lifestyle or behaviour to show that they are rich people, nobles and upper class, they have a power.

Lifestyles and behaviors especially for the bourgeois are living for pleasure. Because its hard to let go of the pleasures that are indirectly done by the upper classes. They dont want to lose their reputation and lose their connection with life. The data shows the bourgeoisie use their lifestyle, habit, and behavior to show that they are the upper class:

¹⁵ It's a market like I've never seen, dotted with flowers and trees and fountains. ² 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)

3.4 Class Struggle

In this novel the writer observes the reaction of the lower class due to the oppression of the upper class. Reaction is class struggle from the lower class because they always get unfair action from the upper class. Therefore they want to free themselves from the oppression or exploitation of the upper class in the anti-silver struggle. 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.

⁷ “We are the Scarlet Guard and we stand for the freedom and equality of all people-
,” the woman says. I recognize her voice

Farley.

²⁴ “Starting with the Reds”.

¹ “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 .

⁸ “Silvers of Nort, we apologize for interruption. Thirteen minutes ago there was a terrorist attack in the Capital”.

The Silvers around me gasp, bursting into fearful murmurs. ¹⁴ I can only blink in disbelief. Terrorist attack? On the Silvers? Is that even possible?

²⁰ “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)

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social life cannot be separated from class stratification. Using *Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard 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. The red people desire to be free of the silver because of the unfairness and persecution they have endured. 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 epically in this novel.

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