

A Marxist Feminism Critics on John Lennon's Mother

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Abstract

Modern people tend to have problems with multi faces of life. People get happiness from the indulgence of buying things as the impacts of industrialization, and on the other hand, they get alienation in their lives. This double point of view of life can be seen through the life of labor in big cities around the world, especially when it is related to the life of people in western countries, as the research focuses on how to understand the life of John Lennon related to his own experience of having a mother and a father coming-from a working class society. It is an urgent matter to comprehend such life so that people can do something about it. The theory employed is Marxist Feminism. The research method applied was descriptive qualitative, made use of a biographical approach. Lennon's Mother is an expression of his feelings about his past related to his childhood as the son of working-class people. Lennon undergoes feeling of alienation. Capitalism oppresses women as workers, but patriarchal oppresses women as women, and those things affect women's identity and activity

Keywords: Alienation; John Lennon; Marxist Feminism; Mother

A. Introduction

Besides its progress, hope, enjoyment, and achievements, modern people tend to have problems with multi face of life. People get happiness on from the indulgence of buying things as the impacts of industrialization, and on the other hand, they get alienation in their lives (Lukacs, 1867). This double point of view of life can be seen through the life of labor in big cities around the world, especially when it is related to the life of people

in western countries, as the research focuses. This research focuses on how to understand the life of John Lennon related to his own experience of having a mother and a father that came from a working-class society. As this research on the lyrics of a song written by John Lennon and expresses his feelings about his childhood, this work should pay attention on biographical criticism as well as Marxism-Feminism.

John Lennon produced the lyrics of "Mother" in 1970 and this

research noticed that this song is an expression of his feelings about his past related to his childhood. John Lennon was born in Toxteth, a working class area in Liverpool, in 1940 from a father, named Alfred Lennon, who was a navy merchant and a mother, named Julia Stanley. John Lennon's parents' marriage did not last long as the father left his wife for joining the voyages of the ship. The problem also appeared as Julia's father and the family did not accept Alfred for his social background. During the difficulty, Alfred came again in 1944 and asked John to choose if he preferred his father or his mother, John preferred him but went to his mother. Then, John lived with his aunty, Mimi, and with the Stanleys. Julia pursued her later life and worked in a café as she met for the first time her future husband, John Dykins. While on the other hand, John Lennon never met his father anymore until he became a very famous singer and the meeting was cold. Julia died after being hit by a car when John Lennon was 17 years old.

After reading the above paragraph, it can be understood that the application of a "biographical approach" to understanding a literary work is important. Guerin (2005) states that "a historical novel is more meaningful when either, milieu or its author is understood." Therefore, if the word "novel" is changed into "lyrics", it can be understood that the historical life of John Lennon is relevant to this research as it is explained above. Moreover, Abrams (2003) states that expressive criticism is a criticism that is closely related to its author. It defines poetry as the expression, overflow, or utterance of feelings of the author. It can be said that the lyrics of the song that are studied can be understood if the researchers pay attention on the life of the author, John Lennon.

From the background of the family above, it can be studied that this research also needs to apply Marxism-feminism as a way to understand the lyrics of the song "Mother". Tong (2009) explained that classical Marxism actually gives attention to classism in which the gap between the antagonizing classes is

vivid. This classical Marxism focuses the classes rather than the sexes as the main factor of women's oppression. The classical Marxism stresses that human beings are united under the banner of proletariat where they are oppressed by capitalists regardless of their race, religion, sexual background. The negation of individuals into the society of Marxism concept make Marxism hide the individual's presence and his/her own alienation even within its smallest societal life, a family that consists of a husband and a wife.

With the growth of feminism, Marxism is reread within the injection of feminism, the woman's role in a family that is not seen deeply by Marxist as a matter of classes only. The domestic works of a woman, a human being at home as a proletariat-based idea shows, as Tong (2009) says, "domestic work must be recognized as real work, which is productive work". From this idea, then Marxism-feminism is developed in which fruits the principles: 1). Human beings as individuals experience alienation as they are alienated by the capitalists 2) The

alienation makes individuals feel unpleasant with their works 3) Human beings alienate each other because of the feeling of competition that is injected by capitalists 4) They also experience alienation towards the nature.

Marxism sees marriage in the line of classes, the capitalists' and proletariats' marriages. Marx's friend, Engels sees that a capitalist's marriage turns into prostitution as the wife depends too much on a husband (except the woman is independent), while the proletariats' marriage is what Engels terms as "true sex-love". Tong shows that one of prominent figures of Marxism-feminism thinker is Allison Jaggar. Jaggar sees that "capitalism oppresses women as workers, but patriarchal oppresses women as women, and those things affect women's identity and activity.

Because this research uses Marxism and Biographical Approaches, the researchers consider that Lucien Goldmann's idea on sociology of literature is applied. Goldmann (1980) states that a literary work is created by people where their

social classes come. It means that a literary work is the product of someone belongs to a certain class and portrays their socio-economic point of view.

B. Research Method

The research method used in the research is qualitative research and uses biographical aspects as the artifact of the object and then give it interpretation based on the words, and sentences that are found in the lyrics of the song *Mother* and the biography of John Lennon.

C. Results and Discussion

The song of *Mother* starts with the lyrics:

Mother, you had me
But I never had you
I, I wanted you
You didn't want me
So, I
I just got to tell you
Goodbye
Goodbye

The lyrics express the life experience of John Lennon when he finds out the miserable condition he endured when he was a child and how an adult sees the past. The line "Mother, you had me, but I never had you" has

meaning that John remembers the time when he was a child he never had time with his mother, Julia for Julia is busy with her job as one who works at a cafe because she must earn money to finance the family. When Julia lives with Dykins, she has two other children whom John as the eldest child must take care of. John also spends his time with his aunt, Mimi, when he is not with his mother. He expresses "But I never had you" as a way to say that Julia is always in his heart when though she is away for her busy time.

As a classwork woman with three children and a husband, Dykins, Julia had limited time to take care of the little and young John. She had to work and get money and leave her children at home with her sister, Mimi. She might think that she is very responsible for her family, but the son's feeling is different. In this case, it can be said that she feels double oppression and alienation. As a working class woman, she has to work without having quality time with her children and husband, and as a wife she is absorbed to be loyal to Dykins by supposedly spending

time with Dykins and provide him by taking care of him. This condition makes John as a child and young never care about Dykins. Julia also suffers alienation for herself, her family, her husband and children, in which John speaks through this song.

The feeling of alienation is expressed by John Lennon through the words “I, I wanted you. You didn't want me”. John expresses that as a child he wants a warm love and care from a mother, but for John, it does not happen for she has to divide time between doing job (making money as a proletariat) and has to take care the husband. John feels that his mother does not want him when he is a child. John, as a child and young boy does not know that his mother wants him, but the condition makes her not able to make it come true. This condition makes John feels alienated from his mother and his “step” father. Therefore, he says “goodbye” to his mother.

John also expresses how he undergoes alienation on these lines, “Father you left me, I never left you”. He misses a warm hug and pays with his father so that even

when he is four years old he wants to be with his father, but he comes to his mother. The difficult condition that he has when he is very young makes himself miss him when he grows up. He does not have the love and affection form a father figure. He could not have it from Dykins. He interprets his alienation as “I never left you”. Then, John as a father for Julian and Sean form his marriage states that he does not want to see his children feel that as he says “children, don't do what I have done”. The alienation that he has had when he is a child and young boy makes him know that without a father and warm mother is something that a child does not want to.

At the last lines of the lyrics he repeats the words “Mama, don't go, Daddy, come home”. These words show the very typical working class family. The parents, father and mother work together so that they do not have time for their children even though they have only one. It is not enough for a father to finance the family, so that the mother must work too with the expense of their children. John as a child of course

does not know this working class couple's financial problem. He protests why a mother cannot stay at home to care him like what aunty Mimi does, so that he says "mama don't go." This condition shows that John wants to have an idealization that a mother spends more time with a child. John also sees that a father must go home after working at the factory for his children. Many workers spend their times and wages to pubs in Britain for pleasure. The emptiness of being loved by his parents make John feel that he is alienated from both.

D. Conclusion

The results and discussion of research on Lennon's *Mother* seen from Marxist feminism come to the conclusion that Lennon's song entitled *Mother* is an expression of Lennon's feelings about his past related to his childhood as a son of working-class parents. John also expresses how he undergoes alienation. Lennon's mother, Julia, also suffers alienation for herself, her family, her husband and children, in which John speaks through this song.

The very typical working class family. The parents, father and mother work together so that they do not have time for their children even though they have only one.

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