

RESISTANCE AND CRITIC AGAINST BOURGEOISIE IN WIDJI THUKUL'S POEM "BUNGA DAN TEMBOK"

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Abstract

Understanding Indonesian poetry from the New Order Period offers important insights on the social, economic and political situation of that period. "*Bunga dan Tembok*," one of Widji Thukul's well known poems, provides a critical lens of the socioeconomic difficulties that the working class experienced. Although Widji Thukul's poetry has been the subject of multiple studies, it appears that there has not yet a specific examination of his works using a Marxist approach. This study looks at "*Bunga dan Tembok*" from a Marxist angle in an attempt to close this gap. Using Marxist concepts, the main goal of this study is to reveal the socioeconomic situation interpretations in "*Bunga dan Tembok*" by Widji Thukul. This study uses Marxist concepts of alienation and the class system shown in the poem to analyze how the poet responded to the reality of the New Order era. The study used a qualitative methodology, with an emphasis on a detailed textual examination. Marx's concepts acted as theoretical foundations to direct how the poem's content was interpreted. This result highlighted the social inequality between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie during Indonesia's New Order regime. It illustrated how the working-class experienced alienation from their land, labor, and humanity due to exploitation and repression by the ruling elite. Despite these challenges, the poem conveyed a sense of class consciousness and the potential for resistance among the marginalized people, suggesting that they could reclaim their humanity and challenge the oppressive system. The symbol of "Bunga" represented this proletariat resistance, emphasizing their ability to rise against the forces that alienated them.

Keywords: *Marxist Approach, Literary Criticism, Widji Thukul, Class System, Alienation*

INTRODUCTION

The New Order period in Indonesia, spanning from 1966 to 1998, was marked by the government's tight grip on cultural expressions, especially within poetry and literature. During this era, numerous poets and authors who voiced dissenting views encountered persecution and censorship. Poetry emerged as a crucial instrument of resistance in this repressive setting, enabling artists to express their unhappiness and aspirations for freedom from authoritarian control (Krissandi, 2014). The genre of "protest" literature has been explored by several poets, playwrights, and fiction authors (Ferdinal, 2013). According to Sudewa (2016) the socio-economic disparities, the corrupt nature of the New Order regime, and the tendency of its treatment of individuals to depart from human rights were all attacked in literary works. In addition, while maintaining broad control over its populace, the administration avoids opposition and has the authority to collect and utilize any evidence to prosecute and punish writers at any time. (Hanafi, 2022).

"*Bunga dan Tembok*" is one of Widji Thukul's famous poems which tells about exploitation oppression experienced by the working class or known as the proletariat in The New Order Period (Oksinata, 2010). According to Putra (2018) Widji Thukul's poetry remains relevant to contemporary discussions about social justice, inequality, and political oppression even in this modern period and has been brought up to surface again in social media. Widji Thukul himself is a poet and an activist that criticizes the crisis in The New Order Period who is still missing until this day (Astuti, 2023). This study agrees with Ramadhania (2022) that literary works are a very suitable medium for someone to

express themselves. Because, in a literary work there is an expression of human personality in the form of an experience, thoughts, feelings and ideas in a picture that can arouse feelings that are painted in the form of beautiful writing (Jannah, 2024).

Marx argues that economic systems have shaped human history since people's lives are shaped by their financial situation (Cooper, 2015). According to him, a society's "forces of production," or the means by which it generates the tangible components of existence, define it. In accordance with Tabb (2010) the historical situation is the ideological climate that is created by the economic conditions that underlie society, which are referred to as material circumstances. This implies that knowledge of the historical and material contexts in which events and products take place is essential for explaining any social or political situation (Dobie, 2011). In literary theory and practical analysis, Marx integrates the traditional historical approach with a sociological perspective. He emphasizes the economic means of production, which vary across different historical periods. According to Marx, these changes develop through stages: feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and ultimately communism as the final goal of society. This sociological transformation is evident in Indonesian history. The proletariat are fighting for their equal rights that were exploited by the bourgeoisie (Karmila et al., 2024).

This study examined the ways in which the poem reflected the class struggle, social injustice, and oppression experienced by society. An analysis of the poem "Bunga dan Tembok" in the context of social class provided new insights into how this poem depicted the conflict between individuals and social structures. This research addressed two primary questions through the analysis of Wiji Thukul's poem "Bunga dan Tembok" using a Marxist lens. Firstly, how class systems were interpreted within the poem; Secondly, how alienation and resistance manifested in the relationship between the ruling class and the oppressed class as depicted in "Bunga dan Tembok."

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the poem conveys the realities of the working class and underprivileged communities while also criticizing the current social class system. This study will look into the poem's use of alienation and resistance and examine how it inspires readers to consider their own situations and seek hope. The objectives of this research are to provide a fresh perspective on how literature can raise awareness of inequalities and critique society, and to offer deeper insight into how poetry can be employed as a means of overcoming alienation and fostering collective awareness.

Marxism Theory

According to Hopkins (2022) from the theory of Marxism is divided into four main points:

1. Class system that distinguishes between bourgeoisie (middle class and above) and proletarians (workers or laborers),
2. Workers who are alienated from the products they make (Capitalism),
3. Strong ideology or belief (the bourgeoisie) who direct the Proletariat to believe in them),
4. False consciousness or misunderstood perceptions adopted by society that lead the proletariat astray.

The theory used is very relevant to the object or work of literature being studied. The poem serves as a form of resistance and depicts the experiences of both the lower class and upper class, highlighting the alienation that occurs between them.

Social Class Concept

In social life under capitalism, Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto*, categorize social classes into two primary groups: the upper class (Bourgeoisie) and the lower class (Proletariat) (Bressler, 1999). In theory, however, social classes can be divided into three categories: Upper Class, Middle Class, and Lower Class. Marx's theory emerged during the Industrial Revolution, a time when the middle class began to ascend the social hierarchy, often exploiting the lower class as laborers.

Alienation within Marxism

According to Marandika (2018) in Karl Marx theory there are four main forms of alienation highlighting the profound disconnections experienced by individuals in a capitalist society: Alienation from the product of labor, where the goods produced come to face him as a foreign object or as an independent force that exceeds him; Alienation from the act of production, where repetitive work robs people of their creativity and fulfillment; Alienation from one's human nature, where labor is sold for a price that prevents personal development and self-actualization; and alienation from other workers and society, where competition takes the place of cooperation, resulting in social isolation and a lack of solidarity.

Resistance within Marxism

In a capitalist system, there are downtrodden people who accept the status quo without objecting or protesting, and that is the proletariat (Bresser, 1999). This acceptance is called false consciousness (Dobie, 2011), where some members of the proletariat will eventually rebel because they can no longer tolerate the oppression they have been subjected to, even though the majority of them have a false consciousness. This resistance would eventually be established when people eventually develop a consciousness of revolution to demonstrate resistance to the oppressors and to free themselves from the systems established by capitalism (Magnis-Suseno, 2016).

Literature and Marxism

Humans are social creatures and they need to communicate and interact with each other. According to Foley (2019), Marxist theory and literary criticism are closely intertwined, with Marxist literary criticism emerging from the principles of historical materialism articulated by Karl Marx. Key topics in its analysis include the portrayal of class relations, the role of literature in either reinforcing or challenging societal norms, and how the socio-economic context of authors influences their works. Critics often ask foundational questions about class dynamics, oppression, and the ideological implications of literary texts, viewing literature as both a product of its time and a site for potential social change (Bressler, 1999).

Historical Context

In order to understand the historical context of the creation of this poem, it is necessary to have an understanding of the historical context. According to Ningsih et al. (2024) orthodoxy and delegitimization created a public perception that the new order was golden and prosperous. In order to initiate the process of legitimizing and delegitimizing the discourse to the public, the new order used the symbolic domain in such a way that it controlled the meanings and thoughts of the participants in the discourse.

Previous Research

While previous studies have explored several aspects of Widji Thukul's poetry, there has yet to be a specific analysis of his works through a Marxist lens. The poem was analyzed using a semiotic approach by Kusumo (2019). He analyzes the representation of the resistance of the new order regime in the poem "*Bunga dan Tembok*" through hermeneutic reading to expose a supposition into something that has value, which is an interpretation of the situation in the new order in poetry. Ramdani (2023) and also Nurhayati and Humaira (2023) highlight the meaning of the poem through metaphors. They analyze the expressions related to signs and interpret this poem as expressing the feelings and reality of events the poet felt about living in the New Order era.

This research examines one of the famous literature works of Wiji Thukul which is *Bunga dan Tembok* from the lens of literary criticism, namely the Marxist Approach. There are two main points of analysis in this study, namely social class, alienation and resistance from the theory of Marxism.

METHOD

Research Design

This study aims to analyze Wiji Thukul's "*Bunga dan Tembok*" through the critical lens of Marxism in order to comprehend the social and alienation background that underpins it. The method used in this Research is a case study approach as this was defined as an intensive study focused on a single unit with the goal of generalizing larger, more comprehensive unit-to-unit data (Simons, 2015). Qualitative analysis is a type of analysis that is based on descriptive and analytical data. For this reason, compared to numbers, more qualitative research uses descriptive with interpretative value (Ahmadi, 2019).

Research Method

This research consisted of the following steps:

1. Data collection conducted through documentation and library research.
2. Data analysis and data interpretation.
3. Compilation of conclusions and summary of research results.

Research Object

The object of this research is the poem "*Bunga dan Tembok*" by Wiji Thukul. This poem serves as a powerful critique of social injustice and government oppression, particularly during the New Order regime in Indonesia.

Data Collection Techniques

Poetry written during the New Order era by Wiji Thukul serves as the primary data source for this study. This study's method of gathering data was library research and documentation. Library research technique, according to Zed (2014), is a category of activity pertaining to data collection through literature evaluation, which includes books, journals, and other scholarly works. Strong theoretical underpinnings and an understanding of the research setting are the goals here. As Flick (2019) asserts, document analysis represents a crucial methodology in qualitative research, as documents can offer profound insights into the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the phenomena under investigation. It is also necessary to analyze the historical elements and social life of the time when the poem was written.

Data Analysis

Five steps of analysis (Bingham, 2023) have been applied to the data: organization, extraction, interpretation, comprehension, and summary. The poem will be examined via the literary criticism lens of Marxism, with consideration given to the research topic. The first examines the social inequality that exists between proletariat and bourgeois, followed by the analysis of alienation or resistance to social inequality. For instance, capitalism is divided into two groups: the proletariat, who are the workers under the bourgeoisie's control and whose labor generates their riches, and the bourgeoisie, who possess property and so control the means of production.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Class System Portrayed in the Poem "*Bunga dan Tembok*"

In Marxist theory, the class system refers to the division of society into two main groups: the bourgeoisie (ruling class), who own and control the means of production, and the proletariat (working class), who own nothing but their labor power (Bressler, 1999). Between these two classes, there is an exploitative relationship, where the bourgeoisie exploits the labor of the proletariat to enrich themselves, while the proletariat becomes increasingly alienated and oppressed. Where the bourgeoisie oppressed the proletariat, according to Marxist's theory, the proletariat will eventually grow a consciousness of revolution to show resistance towards the oppressors like shown in Indonesian modern literature nowadays (Ferdinal, 2013).

While looking at the poet's background and socioeconomic situation in New Order Regime which motivated him to convey his critics towards the oppressors and add the theory of Marxism, we will be able to discover how the situation portrayed in his work, which one of them a poem called "*Bunga dan Tembok*". This poem shows that this critic poem is his form of resistance in his point of view as the proletariat.

Table 1. Class system portrayed in the poem

No	Poem line(s)	Class System		Oppressions
		Proletariat (Oppressed)	Bourgeoisie (Oppressors)	
1.	"Seumpama bunga Kami adalah bunga yang tak Kau kehendaki tumbuh"	Bunga, Kami	Kau	Tak menghendaki (bunga) tumbuh Do not want (flowers) to grow
2.	"Engkau lebih suka membangun Rumah dan merampas tanah"	-	Engkau	Membangun rumah dan merampas tanah Building houses and seizing land
3.	"Seumpama bunga Kami adalah bunga yang tak Kau kehendaki adanya"	Bunga, Kami	Kau	Tak menghendaki adanya (bunga) Does not approve the existence of flowers
4.	"Engkau lebih suka membangun Jalan raya dan pagar besi"	-	Engkau	Membangun jalan raya dan pagar besi Building roads and iron fences
5.	"Seumpama bunga Kami adalah bunga yang Dirontokkan di Bumi kami sendiri"	Bunga, Kami	-	Merontokkan (bunga) di bumi (mereka sendiri) Threshing (flowers) on (their own) earth
6.	"Jika kami bunga Engkau adalah tembok itu"	Kami, bunga	Engkau, tembok	-
7.	"Tapi di tubuh tembok itu Telah kami sebar biji-biji"	Kami	tembok	-
8.	Suatu saat kami akan tumbuh bersama	Kami	-	-
9.	Dengan keyakinan: engkau harus hancur!	engkau	-	-
10.	Dengan keyakinan kami Dimana pun tirani harus tumbang!	kami	tirani	-

There are two terms that have a connotation of being oppressed, "*kami*" and "*bunga*". "*Bunga*" itself can be seen as a representation of "*kami*" who are oppressed or known as the term the proletariat. The term is mentioned 12 times in the poem.

There are also terms classified as the bourgeoisie or oppressor, namely "*Kau*", "*engkau*" "*tirani*" and "*tembok*". "*tembok*" can be seen as the representation of "*engkau*" the oppressor. The oppressor in this poem is mentioned a total of 8 times.

"Bunga" as Representation of the Proletariat

In this poem, "*bunga*" are symbolic of the working class or small people who do not have access to the means of production such as land and other resources. These flowers are those "*tak kau hendaki*

tumbuh”, which illustrates that the ruling class (capitalist rulers or the state) do not want to see the little people develop or progress. They are marginalized and oppressed, not given the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of development that they contribute to.

Small people, such as laborers and farmers, work hard but remain poor, while the fruits of their labor are monopolized by who controls the means of production (Dobbie, 2011). The construction of houses, highways, and iron fences in this poem are symbols of capitalism that benefits the upper class and excludes the needs of the lower class. This is in accordance with the concept of capitalism in Marxism, where development and economic progress actually only serve the interests of a handful of elites (Bressler, 1999).

“Tembok” as Representation of the Bourgeoisie

According to Dobbie (2011), the Bourgeoisie or the dominant class, using its power to make the prevailing system seem to be the logical, natural one, entraps the proletariat into holding the sense of identity and worth that the bourgeoisie wants them to hold, one that will allow the powerful to remain in control. “*Tembok*” in this poem symbolizes the ruling class that controls the country's resources and policies. This wall blocks the working class' access to their wealth and rights, and creates a clear boundary between the powerful and the controlled. This ruling class serves as the guardian of the repressive capitalist system, ensuring that the marginalized people cannot challenge or change the existing order.

“*Tembok*” or the wall also represents the social structure created by the bourgeoisie to maintain the status quo. In Marxism, the rulers (bourgeoisie) not only control the means of production, but also create ideologies that strengthen their control over the proletariat, such as through government policies that seize people's land for infrastructure development that only benefits the upper class. This aligns with what Bressler (1999) states about the capitalists, who decide what beliefs are acceptable, what values are held, and what laws are to be formed. They control society's ideology or its hegemony and its social consciousness.

Alienation in the Poem “*Bunga dan Tembok*”

Alienation in Marxist theory is a concept that describes the feeling of human alienation from their true essence (Hopkins, 2022). In the context of capitalism, alienation occurs when workers feel alienated from the product of their labor, from the act of production, from fellow workers and society, and from one's human nature (Marandika, 2018). Alienation occurs because the capitalist system reduces humans to instruments of production governed by external forces (the ruling or bourgeois class).

Table 2. Alienation portrayed in the poem

No.	Poem line(s)	Type of Alienation
1.	“ <i>kami adalah bunga yang tak kau kehendaki tumbuh</i> ”	Alienation from self
2.	“ <i>engkau lebih suka membangun rumah dan merampas tanah</i> ”	Alienation from the product of labor
3.	“ <i>kami adalah bunga yang dirontokkan di bumi kami sendiri</i> ”	Alienation from self
4.	“ <i>engkau lebih suka membangun jalan raya dan pagar besi</i> ”	Alienation from the product of labor and alienation from other people

There are 3 types of alienations that are explicitly shown in the poem, they are alienation from the product of labor, alienation from self or humanity, and alienation from people or society.

Alienation from the Product of Labor

The marginalized people are depicted as flowers that are thrashed on their own land in the lines, "*engkau lebih suka membangun rumah dan merampas tanah*" and "*engkau lebih suka membangun jalan raya dan pagar besi*". In those lines, alienation appears in the form of the government seizing people's land for development that does not provide direct benefits to them. Land, as one of the important means of production for the marginalized people, is taken away from them, and with the loss of access to land, they lose control over the resources they need to live.

The marginalized people are alienated from the fruits of their labor, because while they may contribute to development through their labor, they cannot enjoy the fruits of that development. Houses and infrastructure are built only for the benefit of the upper class, while the marginalized people remain marginalized and live in squalor. This happens because they work out of necessity and without means, their work and the fruits of their labor no longer belong to the workers, but to the owners of capital. This is the basis of alienation in capitalist society (Suseno, 2016).

Alienation from self or humanity

The poem also reflects the alienation of the people from their own identity (Marandika, 2018). This is where labor is sold for a price that prevents personal development and self-actualization. In the third stanza, "*kami adalah bunga yang dirontokkan di bumi kami sendiri*", there is a realization that the marginalized people have been expelled or alienated from their own homeland. They feel unrecognized as part of the nation's development, even though historically and geographically they should be part of this country. This eviction makes them feel alien in their own homeland.

In addition, the marginalized people are also alienated from their humanity which also portrayed in the line "*Seumpama bunga kami adalah bunga yang tak kau kehendaki tumbuh*". Ongoing capitalist development, with its focus on profit and expansion, ignores human needs such as welfare, land rights, and social justice. The marginalized people are treated as mere tools to serve the interests of the ruling class, rather than as individuals with rights and dignity (Magnis-Suseno, 2016).

Alienation from Other People and Society

Alienation is also evident in the distance created between the marginalized people and their fellow members of society. The lines "*engkau lebih suka membangun rumah dan merampas tanah*" and "*Engkau lebih suka membangun jalan raya dan pagar besi*" show that capitalist development creates a physical and social distance that further separates the working class from the ruling class. The iron fence symbolizes the boundary that separates those with power and privilege from those who are oppressed. The marginalized people are not only alienated from resources, but also from social relations with fellow human beings, due to the class system that puts them in a subordinate position (Marandika, 2018)

The Resistance in the Poem "*Bunga dan Tembok*"

According to Dobbie (2011), there are the oppressed people in a capitalist society who accept how things are without protest or resistance towards the situation, and this acceptance is known as false consciousness. While most of the proletariat have a false consciousness, eventually there will be ones who revolt and cannot stand the oppression they have been going through. A consciousness of revolution to show resistance towards the oppressors and liberating themselves from the systems created by capitalism will eventually occur and this process would be what is called resistance.

Table 3. Resistance portrayed in the poem

No	Line(s)	Resistance	Interpretation
1.	" <i>Tapi di tubuh tembok itu Telah kami sebar biji-biji</i> "	Sow seeds in the wall	Sowing seeds of resistance that will eventually break the walls of capitalism down

2.	<i>“Suatu saat kami akan tumbuh Bersama”</i>	Grow	The seeds of resistance will grow and destroy the walls of capitalism
3.	<i>“Dengan keyakinan: engkau harus hancur!”</i>	Destroying the walls	Destroying the walls or the system of capitalism
4.	<i>“Dengan keyakinan kami Dimana pun tirani harus tumbang!”</i>	Believe tyranny should be collapsed	The capitalism should be collapsed

The consciousness of being oppressed and the resistance that followed it is believed to be the last chapter of a capitalism which could be in the last stanzas of the poem *Bunga dan Tembok*. The resistance is mentioned 4 times in this poem.

In early findings about the interpretation, *“Bunga”* would be *“The proletariat”* and *“Tembok”* would be the system of capitalism, while searching more meanings to it, *“Bunga”* is also interpreted as consciousness of being oppressed and the need to liberate from the shackles of capitalism.

Resistance shown in the Poem

Although the poem describes the process of alienation experienced by the marginalized people, there is also an element of class consciousness that emerges as an attempt to fight against the alienation. In the fourth stanza, *“Tapi di tubuh tembok itu telah kami sebar biji-biji. Suatu saat kami akan tumbuh bersama”*. This is a representation of the revolutionary consciousness expected by the proletariat, where they begin to realize their alienation and build solidarity to fight the oppressive system.

The process of liberation from alienation occurs when the proletariat begins to recognize that they are presently not free agents, but individuals controlled by the rulers for their own benefits (Bressler, 1999). To be free they have to leave the false consciousness and unite themselves against the ruling class. The seeds of resistance sown by the marginalized people in this poem illustrate the potential for revolution that will overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and break down the walls of tyranny.

In the last stanza, *“Dengan keyakinan kami dimana pun tirani harus tumbang!”*, Wiji Thukul voiced the belief that the struggle of the working class will eventually free them from their alienation. The social revolution carried by the working class will destroy the oppressive class system and restore the humanity of those alienated by capitalism and state power. According to Marx, in order to be free from the enslavement, the proletariat must revolt and strip the bourgeoisie of its economic and political power and place the ownership of all property in the hands of the government, who will then fairly distribute the people’s wealth.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing from the point of view of Marxist theory, the poem *“Bunga dan Tembok”* reflects the reality of the class system that creates social inequality between the marginalized people (proletariat) and the rulers (bourgeoisie) in the New Order regime in Indonesia. The working-class experience alienation from their land, labor, humanity, and solidarity due to exploitation and repression by the ruling class. However, the poem also shows the existence of class consciousness and the potential for resistance that will restore the humanity of the marginalized people and destroy the tyrannical system. *“Bunga”* as a symbol of proletariat resistance shows that despite being oppressed by the capitalist, which is *“Tembok”* in the poem, they have the power to rise up and subvert the power that alienates them.

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