

CLASS STRUGGLE IN 1984 BY GEORGE ORWELL

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Abstract

This article researches the complicated class structure of George Orwell's dystopian masterpiece, which is the novel titled "1984." By examining the clear and stark divisions within Oceania's society, this analysis aims to uncover the underlying social commentary that is on the text. The article will be focusing on two different classes, the classes are Bourgeois and Proletarian. Through a close examination of these classes' roles, privileges, and oppression, this study will reveal how Orwell makes use of class stratification to give a critique about the dangers of totalitarianism and the annihilation of individual freedom. This research will also focus more on showing the correlation and difference between the Bourgeois and Proletarian class, and how unfair the treatment the lower class will get meanwhile the higher class having a decent life. Ultimately, this exploration shows the lasting relevance of "1984" as a warning tale about the consequences of unchecked power and the timeless struggle for social justice.

Keywords: "1984" George Orwell, Class struggle, Bourgeois and Proletarian

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INTRODUCTION

George Orwell, whose birth name was Eric Arthur Blair, was born in 1903 in Motihari, India and died in 1950. By the end of his life he was one of the most influential writers of his day and addressed the pressing dangers of imperialism, fascism, and totalitarianism in a deeply personal fashion (Ridgley, 2024).

George Orwell was a social writer who was very aware of social and political issues. One of them is about class struggle. The dominance of a certain social class is the root cause of class conflict. According to Scoot, dominance is the process of obtaining products, services, and labor from a subject people. (Scoot, 1990:21).

Novels employ a variety of subjects. Novelists typically employ themes through the choice of characters, storyline, point of view, and other literary components. Studying the application of Marxist literary criticism by comprehending how bourgeois and proletariat people are characterized in society is one of the topics to be covered in this book. (Nurholis, 2022)

Neo-Marxist innovation in the 1970s was primarily motivated by the need to explain real-world situations that differed from the traditional reading of Marx's depiction of capitalism. At the core of Marxist orthodoxy is the narrow two-class interpretation of the Communist Manifesto, which this new generation of Marxist thinkers specifically sought to explain in order to explain the "embarrassing" persistence of the "middle class" in the field of class theory and analysis (Carchedi 1975; Poulantzas 1975a; Wright 1976). Forty years later, class theory must be updated to adequately address additional empirical class effects that were missed by the first generation but are now readily apparent in the twenty-first century's global capitalism driven by neoliberalism. This re-fitting is also prompted by Beck's argument that existing techniques of class and stratification analysis are inadequate for identifying or explaining the complexity of

contemporary forms of individualized social difference. In 1999, he claimed that "class" had devolved into a "zombie category." (Beck, 2002).

The idea that Marx's theory can still be used to explain contemporary capitalism is known as neo-Marxism. Similarly, the neo-Marxist perspective includes a critical social scientific stance toward all aspects of Marx's goal. Marx's technique, conceptual framework, and historical analysis form the foundation of a powerful social scientific critique of contemporary capitalism, notwithstanding its evident defects and weaknesses. His vast and varied corpus of work can be further investigated, built upon, and imaginatively adapted to explain contemporary capitalist realities, which form the basis of strategic analysis of "what is to be done." While orthodox Marxism shares a political commitment to the progressive growth of capitalism, Neo-Marxism seeks to transcend it. (Neilson, 2017)

This paper refers to previous research; (Erzal Pratomo Kurnianto) related to the Winton's Alienation and Class Struggle in George Orwell's 1984 Writings: With Reference to "Nineteen Eighty-Four" about class struggle in this novel.

Three separate socioeconomic strata comprise society in Nineteen Eighty-Four: the hardworking Outer Party, the aristocratic Inner Party, and the great majority of illiterate proletariat. Winston discovers in Goldstein's book that the history of humanity has been a recurring conflict between the High, the Middle, and the Low, three opposing social classes. Winston expresses optimism in this book that the working class will realize how oppressed they are and start a revolution. At other times, he laments that it is highly improbable that the proletariat will rebel until they are conscious, and that they will only become conscious after rebelling. (Kurnianto, 2017)

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative methodology, with textual analysis serving as the main technique to investigate how class conflict is portrayed in George Orwell's 1984. Marxist literary criticism, which emphasizes how socioeconomic structures shape literary narratives and human experiences, serves as the basis for the examination.

1. Textual Analysis as an Instrument of Criticism The layers of meaning contained in Orwell's 1984 are revealed and interpreted through the use of textual analysis. In order to expose the mechanics of class dominance and the systematic oppression of the proletariat by the ruling elite, the research focuses on important narrative components such character development, symbolism, and dialogue. The portrayal of the Inner Party as a representation of the Bourgeois class, which maintains its dominance by propaganda, monitoring, and manipulation of historical facts, receives special focus. At the same time, the analysis examines the oppressed status of the Proletariat, emphasizing the obstacles that keep them from rebelling and their exploitation. This approach enables a more in-depth reading of the text and highlights Orwell's criticism of sociopolitical systems.
2. Marxist Literary Structure The theoretical framework for analyzing the power dynamics and class hierarchies portrayed in the novel is provided by Marxist literary criticism, which frames the study. The study analyzes how the story depicts the battle between the ruling and working classes, connecting this conflict with historical and ideological criticisms of capitalism, drawing on classical and Neo-Marxist viewpoints. Important Marxist ideas like class consciousness, ideology, and alienation are used to assess the circumstances under which the proletariat continues to be oppressed. Additionally, the research takes into account how political power and economic systems interact to maintain the Bourgeois class's supremacy, providing a critical interpretation of Orwell's depiction of totalitarianism and its socioeconomic foundations.

This study aims to offer a more profound understanding of the class struggle in 1984 by fusing textual analysis with a Marxist perspective, highlighting its significance as a timeless indictment of authoritarian power and systematic inequality.

DISCUSSION

In the novel 1984, there are social classes. George Orwell's 1984 class struggle is among the best topics. Since there are upper and lower classes in society, social class is the subject of societal change rather than individual. The lower class, sometimes referred to as the worker or proletariat, survives on wages, whereas the upper class, or bourgeois, benefits from land interests. The proletariat is labor, while the bourgeois is the power that owns a product. (Nurholis, 2022: 252).

A. Bourgeois

The term "Bourgeois" is usually used for the middle class to upper class people who have power and production capital. It is the same as the Bourgeois people or the Inner Party in the novel "1984" by George Orwell.

According to Sarkar, Bourgeoisie people has the power to control the means of production like machinery and commercial sites, then they (memperoleh) their wealth from the profits of those production. Then the landowners derive their livelihood from rent, meanwhile proletariat are only owning their labor and sell it for an earning (Sarkar, 2022)

So, some controls that the Inner Party people have include political power that can make them manipulate information and history to prevail their ideology, surveillance control by watching the employees through telescreen or Thought Police, Thought control by suppressing independent thought, controlling the economy, suppressing any rebellion by social control. Big Brother is a symbol of this Bourgeoisie class, the same as O'Brien who reveals himself as a loyal Party member.

This is happening because of the vulnerability of the lower class. Due to the lack of education, resources, and the sanctioning of any attempts to form actual politically organized organizations that would function without the state's meddling, these groups lead lives of insecurity, below-par living conditions, and discrimination from the higher classes, especially the bourgeoisie or the ruling class. (Thalouith and Katia, 2023)

"... even a member of the Inner Party lives an austere, laborious kind of life.

Nevertheless, the few luxuries that he does enjoy his large, well-appointed flat, the better texture of his clothes, the better quality of his food and drink and tobacco, his two or three servants, his private motor-car or helicopter—set him in a different world from a member of the Outer Party, and the members of the Outer Party have a similar advantage in comparison with the submerged masses whom we call 'the proles'."(Orwell, 1949: 242)

This quote from the novel indicates that the highest class such as Bourgeois/Inner Party living such a great life with such a luxurious lifestyle by living in a spacious apartment, fine clothing, high-quality food, personal servants, access to technology, having private motor-car or helicopter, and of course they're also taking a control over the lives of people in lower classes.

Meanwhile the Outer Party or middle class have a simpler lifestyle by living in a small flat, wearing simple clothing, having limited access to high-quality goods, they also keep being monitored by telescreen, their minds controlled to ensure their royalty to the Party or Big Brother.

Meanwhile Proletariat people or the lowest class living in such a harsh condition. They live in squalor, working for hours in dangerous and unsanitary conditions, they're also kept uneducated, exploited by the Party, their labor used to maintain the regime.

This social hierarchy shows the author's critique of totalitarianism and the effects of power. Still, the Inner Party, despite their privilege, are still trapped within the oppressive system they maintain

'... And there was one bloke—well, I couldn't give you 'is name, but a real powerful speaker 'e was. 'E didn't 'alf gibe it 'em! 'Lackeys!' 'e says, 'Lackeys of the bourgeoisie! Flunkies of the ruling class!' Parasites—that was another of them. And 'yenas—'e definitely called 'em 'yenas. Of course 'e was referring to the Labour Party, you understand.' (Orwell, 1949: 115)

There are some key terms in that quote. First, lackeys, refers to servants or followers who blindly obey orders and support ideologies without having a critical thinking. Second, flunkies, is similar to lackeys, they are also subservient to the other, especially the people in powerful positions. The last is Yenas, likely a derogatory reference to the Labour Party.

This quote provides a historical context of the novel, when the characters are living in a totalitarian society, free speech and independent thought were suppressed at that time, and still are.

B. Proletarian

"Proletarian" is a term that refers to the lower class, usually a worker that lives from wages. If the worker didn't work or did not get a job by the owner of the factory, they cannot live (Nurholis, 2022).

The party did not care about the proletarian's other activities as long as the proletarian continued to work and breed. Because it was not necessary to know much about the proletarian. "In reality very little was known about the proles. It was not necessary to know much. So long as they continued to work and breed, their other activities were without importance" (Orwell, 1984: 53).

"It was not desirable that the proles should have strong political feelings. All that was required of them was a primitive patriotism which could be appealed to whenever it was necessary to make them accept longer working-hours or shorter rations" (Orwell, 1984: 54). Here it is clearly stated that the proletarians are employed for long hours and receive low wages. A strong political feeling is not needed for the proles.

"There was a vast amount of criminality in London, a whole world-within-a-world of thieves, bandits, prostitutes, drug-peddlers, and racketeers of every description; but since it all happened among the proles themselves, it was of no importance" (Orwell, 1984: 54). It is not such an important problem for what happened between the proles. Even most of the proles do not have telescreens in their house. "The great majority of proles did not even have telescreens in their homes" (Orwell, 1984: 54).

"In the terms of our earlier classification, the proles are the Low: for the slave population of the equatorial lands who pass constantly from conqueror to conqueror, are not a permanent or necessary part of the structure" (Orwell, 1984: 157). They position the proles at the lower classification and claim that proles are not an important part of the structure.

"From the proletarians nothing is to be feared. Left to themselves, they will continue from generation to generation and from century to century, working, breeding, and dying, not only without any impulse to rebel, but without the power of grasping that the world could be other than it is. They could only become dangerous if the advance of industrial technique made it necessary to educate them more highly; but, since military and commercial

rivalry are no longer important, the level of popular education is actually declining” (Orwell, 1984: 158). They are not afraid of the proletariat, because they know that the proletariat will continue to do their work as always. This happened because there is no motivation to rebel or the ability to know that the world can be different from what it is.

In the novel proles are described as people who don't realize their own strength. It shows in the novel “But the proles, if only they could somehow become conscious of their own strength” (Orwell, 1984: 52). The proles are also considered as dumb masses “Below that come the dumb masses whom we habitually refer to as ‘the proles’” (Orwell, 1984: 156-157). The proles never complain about their condition because the proles has no standard of comparison “—like the proletariat, tolerates present-day conditions partly because he has no standards of comparison” (Orwell, 1984: 160). The proles are infrequently aware of the war “The slightly more favoured workers whom we call ‘the proles’ are only intermittently conscious of the war” (Orwell, 1984: 162). The party knows that the proletarians will never rebel because they simply can't. “The proletarians will never revolt, not in a thousand years or million. They cannot” (Orwell, 1984: 198). The capitalist system press the proletariat to have no their own income, to have no their own life, and makes them not have the power to ‘speak in protest’ (Nurholis, 2022: 257). “There was a whole chain of separate departments dealing with proletarian literature, music, drama, and entertainment generally” (Orwell, 1984: 19). So the proletariat can not read, listen to music, watch dramas, or enjoy the entertainment they want because it has already been controlled by the department.

CONCLUSION

According to the discussion, Bourgeois and Proletarian are two different castes. The factories and businesses that comprise the means of production are heavily influenced by the Bourgeois. This class's members frequently take advantage of the labor of the proletariat, or working class, in order to increase their riches. The capitalist system never cares about the problems faced by the proletarians. They only need the proletarians to keep doing their work. The capitalist system also makes the proletariat unaware of the flaws in the system of the country. The proletariat also becomes less concerned with the ongoing war that is happening in the country. Due to the Ministry of Truth's repeated revisions of historical facts, the proletariat frequently accepts the status quo since they lack a benchmark by which to measure themselves. The Party is also certain that the proletariat won't rebel because of this.

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