

MARXIST'S ALIENATION IN JOHN STEINBECK'S *OF MICE AND MEN*'S CHARACTERS

Yossa Galuh Darhantian

English Literature, Faculty of Language and Arts, The State University of Surabaya

yossagaluh@gmail.com

Abstrak

Pengasingan diri merupakan musuh utama dalam bidang kemanusiaan. Bentuk pengasingan diri terjadi melalui diri sendiri maupun dari orang lain. Namun, menurut pandangan seorang Karl Marx, pengasingan ini terjadi kepada seseorang akibat dari kapitalisme yang terjadi pada sebuah kelompok. Hal itulah yang terjadi pada para pekerja peternakan kuda yang ada di dalam cerita *Of Mice and Men* oleh John Steinbeck. George dan semua pekerja peternakan menghadapi kapitalisme di dalam komunitas mereka. Disinilah terindikasi terjadinya perbuatan mengasingkan diri di antara para pekerja peternakan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah karakter-karakter di novel *Of Mice and Men* mengalami pengasingan sesuai teori Karl Marx. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kapitalisme menjadi latar belakang terjadinya pengasingan diri oleh para pekerja.

Kata Kunci: *pengasingan diri, kapitalisme.*

Abstract

Alienation is believed as a major problem in humanity. The forms of alienation come from self either from surroundings. However, according to Karl Marx's view, alienation occurs due to the capitalism happens in a community. In the story of *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, George and the ranch workers live inside a capitalistic society. This study aims to reveal if the characters in the story are alienated according Marxist's feature. In result, they are indicated to be alienated due to the class division inside the ranch. This suits to Marxist's features of alienation.

Keywords: *alienation, capitalism.*

INTRODUCTION

"Guys like us, are the loneliest guys in the world" (Steinbeck, 13). This alienated expression of George is triggered by his tiredness of working all day long as a ranch worker. Sadly, he and the rest of the ranch workers are isolated inside the ranch and of course, from the outer world. Therefore, from the quotation above, alienation clearly becomes one of the major themes of the novella, *Of Mice and Men*.

John Steinbeck is one of the well-known writer who always raised social issues in his writings. One of his best-seller novella, *Of Mice and Men*, was written in 1937 during the Great Depression age of America. In the same year the book was written, American people suffered major economic problems (after its peak in 1929) ever happened in the history of United States of America. Therefore, *Of Mice and Men* also comprehends the Great Depression of America atmosphere.

The story of *Of Mice and Men* itself mainly tells about George Milton and Lennie Smalls. Both of them are migrant workers. They move from their hometown, "Soledad" (Steinbeck, 1) to Salinas, California (1). Since they are migrant workers, they do not have settle livings with no permanent jobs. Being nomadic workers with no

real job security are the exact situation of what happened back in the 1939 of American Great Depression era. Their movement from Soledad to California also depicts the similar big movement of people from Soledad to California in 1930.

This social issue of Great Depression is well-described through the story. The situation of capitalism back then seems affect to John Steinbeck's writing in this novella. The class struggle between ranch workers and ranch owners in the story is a clear example. The inequality of economy leads to class division. The ranch workers, including George and Lennie, have to be live and sleep in a small "bunkhouse" (Steinbeck, 10) inside the ranch, while the Boss, Curley, as well as his wife, can live in their house. In Marx's view, the economic inequality and class struggle are the signals of capitalism.

However, Marx himself had predicted that this condition leads to several problems. One of his concerns is the laborers alienation, in his writing of "The Estranged Labor" (1844). The class division, between ranch workers (proletariat) and ranch owners (capitalists) causes the alienation of self to the class of the laborers.

Marx believes that alienation becomes the major problem of humanity. In Marxists perspective, the laborers are alienated from the capitalist mode of

production. When laborers are denied from the social contacts and have to work all the day long without communicating with other equally intelligent human, this way they are being alienated. Since the laborers are separated from the other classes, this contributes to the alienation.

Since the novella was written in 1937, or between the Great Depression era, it is necessary to understand the portrait of the exact situation happened back then in America.

The Great Depression Era of United States happened during 1929 until 1939. That was the age when American suffered mostly economical problem. The stock market crashed which sent out American largest stock market, Wall Street, into a panic situation and wiped out million investors. This situation caused the dropping numbers of investments. During the situation, the industries fired many workers which resulted the increasing numbers of unemployment and forced American worked as labors. They worked hard for the living before the dawn until night came. By 1932, the Great Depression Era of United States reached its peak. 15 million Americans were unemployed and half of the country's banks had failed. Therefore, by losing a job, one is also losing status which led to Americans suffering from unhappiness and economical problem. It was one of major disasters happened back in the USA.

There was also a great movement of emigrant from the urban area to suburban area. This occurred due to the unavailability of employment in the industrial area. Therefore the laborers decided to leave and adapt the migrant lifestyle. They would do anything to work and pursue for personal happiness and they tend to move from one to another place working to their bone and they were always on the road searching for a job, working short and intense periods before heading off to a new place. The reasons for their migrations were, they lacked of knowledge rather than farming in several areas. They also wanted to leave urban areas due to its lack of jobs.

The American Economic systems also indicated the deep and widespread frustration and discontent. They lost their houses and apartments and decided to move from one to another houses and mostly they lived in their relatives' houses. Hence, it was common back then if each house filled with about eight to twelve house members that they can handle close enough to feel one another's warmth.

In this depression, poverty became the worst friend. It made Americans lost jobs and savings and forced them to move westward, to California to be exact as it gained markedly in population, in search of jobs. However, it became more difficult for every unemployed to find for a job since machines were used to help the production. This resulted to the increase of the necessity of luxuries but the number of jobs was reduced. The use of machines also started to worry them. Therefore, the number of jobless at the beginning of 1930 reached 4 million, and by the end of 1930, to be exact at November, the number jumped to 6 million. This stressful condition made the unemployed more suffer. Here is an example of a woman

who described her daily life in Minneapolis' city unemployed office, she said:

"So we sit in this room like cattle waiting for a nonsexist job, willing to work to the farthest atom of energy, unable to work, unable to get food and lodging, unable to bear children. Here we must sit in this shame looking at the floor, worse than beast a slaughter," (Norton, 730)

This quotation portrays a general situation of the jobless back then. They did not have job, no money, no food and no shelter. The story *Of Mice and Men* took place in Salinas, California, which also suffered the impact of this depression. They moved from one place to another to survive and they facing a hard time. Idle, disputed, hungry, defeated, withdrawn and brooding. They began to feel that somehow they were to blame everything, that somehow, somewhere, they had failed (Fraizer, 220). These stressful pictures of life at America does not mean to be exaggerated, thus it did happen and influenced entire unemployed American.

Back then, farmers' income touched bottom and workers did not get fair wages. This situation was used by businessmen for some profit. "Many business leaders tried to take advantages of the large numbers of unemployed workers to set the minimum wage at a very low level and they (business leaders) tried to raise their incomes and improve their (workers) working condition" (Graebner, 442) which made the workers suffered more.

The attention of this hard situation, called to low-class workers such as farmers and laborers. They got to work everyday, from day to night to fulfil their needs and gave food to their families). They were exploited both psychologically and physically by government and employers. Therefore, this led to capitalism by exploiting the worker, the capitalist is able to get "more surplus value than is otherwise achievable" (Marx & Engels: 1998). Thus, Marx believes this depression brought to some problems, which is one is alienation.

Many American became unemployed. It was because of the crash of the stock market and America failed facing the problem. They became moneyless, homeless and jobless. This situation forced them to work day to night to fulfill their needs. This stressful condition also made every labor competed each other to reach for their dream and would eliminate each other, which was used by the business owners to gain more profit by forcing their labors to work more for it. The bourgeoisie rule capitalist society by owning the land/property and the means of production, and in order for the proletariat to survive in society they are forced to sell their labor power (Marx & Engels, 127).

Marx's understanding and definition of alienation is basically divided into four features. The features are alienation from *the product of labor*, alienation from *the process of producing*, alienation from *the other worker*, and, which this study does not use, alienation from *the species being*. However, to understand the features of Marxist's alienation, one should understand the Marxist's capitalism.

"Capitalism is a dynamic system whose profit-driven mechanism leads to the continual revolutionizing of the

means of production and the forging of new markets” (Barker, 114) in the other words, capitalism has its own political purposes which is to take as much advantages as possible to earn more personal wealth. “In capitalist economic system, an object’s value becomes impersonal. Its value is translated into a monetary equivalent” (Tyson, 62) shortly, the balance between capitalists and laborers is only the money.

Marx’s concept of capitalism also believes on the class struggle. This is the part where laborer, labelled as proletariat, is against oppresses from the capitalist (Cohen, 8). Marx argues, capitalism is also “a history of class struggles, contest between exploiting and exploited ruling and oppressed classes” (Marx, 6) in which the proletariat is disadvantaged because their class is always below the capitalist. He also added, “The exploited and oppressed class -the proletariat- cannot attain its emancipation from the sway of the exploiting and ruling class -the bourgeoisie-“(6)

However, the equality is not impossible. The proletariat might not be independent from the capitalist unless “without at the same time, and once and for all, emancipating society at large from all exploitation, oppression, class distinctions and class struggles” (Marx, 6) which would be a difficult homework for proletariat to revolute the society.

“The development of capitalism proved irresistible and it brought alienation on a scale previously unimaginable” (Cox, 43). As described previously, capitalism leads to alienation and some other humanity problems. Marx identified some features in which alienation pervades capitalist society. Under capitalism, sadly, the work becomes an alienated activity, “because the workers cannot use the things he produces to keep alive or to engage in further productive activity” (Cox, 43). “Thus workers produce cash crops for the market when they are malnourished, build houses in which they will never live, make cars they can never buy, produce shoes they cannot afford to wear, and so on” (43).

The title, *Of Mice and Men*, itself implies the capitalistic society. Frankly, the title depicts between human and animal. Commonly, mouse is a disgusting animal creature to human. It carries many diseases since it lives in the dirt, such as pits, rubbish and any unhygienic place. However, according to Joseph E. Mason, in his writing of *Mouse Symbolism*, mouse symbolizes the “dreams of the great earth changes” (12). Clearly, this symbolizes the story’s capitalistic society.

The ranch workers live in under roof in a small “rectangular building” (Steinbeck, 10) which is called as the bunkhouse. “In the middle of the room stood a big square table littered with playing cards, and around it were grouped boxes for the players to sit on” (10) Their activities are mainly in the bunkhouse. Therefore, the ranch workers represent the proletarians in capitalism, or the powerless society. The ranch owners, however, they have power over the ranch workers. In this case, they are symbolized as the capitalists.

However, according to Mason, the mice symbolize the dream of changes. The ranch workers have dreams to change. This is illustrated in George. He dreams of “O.K.

Someday-we’re gonna get the jack together and we’re gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an’ a cow and some pigs and-“ (Steinbeck, 8), which means that he wants to change. This is how the capitalism is shown in the story. The mice, the ranch workers, dream of a change. They want to get out from the capitalistic society. This marks that capitalistic society does exist in the story.

Therefore, after understanding the capitalism in the story, it is time to discuss the characters’ alienation according to Marx’s perspective.

Alienation from the Product of Labor

According to Marxist, the process of self-estrangement might happen from the products the laborers should produce. As Marx accords:

“Since the migrant laborers’ work is monotonous, the product of their labor loses its creative meaning, thus becoming alien to the worker. The farmers do not pay attention to the plant (product) they harvest, their mission is to get the job done and in the end get paid in order to make ends meet. Labor has become merely an activity to turn the product into a commodity. When labor has reached this level, the worker is externalized from the product and is no longer able to identify with it” (Marx 29).

What differs between human-labor and animal is the ‘means’ of self-expression, self-development, and self-realization. “It is not only a means to the product but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy; hence work is enjoyable.” (Fromm 41-42). This statement shows that human demands to be treated as human being such as not to be limited to be creative or to express feelings. Or else, human (in this case is labor) can be alienated by the monotonous work. Hence, once the laborers realize that they are forced to work for another person, they will be alienated by the labor’s product. Finally, the external character of the work for the worker is shown by the fact that it is not his own work but work for someone else, that in work “he does not belong to himself but to another person” (Marx 98-99).

Alienation from the Produce of Labor

This is the next stage of Marxism alienation, where the “product of the labor is transformed to the servant of his object” (Marx, 29) and where they lose their purposes of life. Which he marks:

“The more the worker expands himself in (the alienated) work, the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life and the less he belongs to himself” (Marx, 96)

At the first stage of alienation, the laborers get alienated from the from the labor’s product which is as an external object. However, in this second stage of alienation they become alienated from the ‘act of producing’ which results in inability to identify themselves and make them hate their jobs. This unable capability to identify self leads to, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions; eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an

animal. "What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" (Marx, 30). Or in the other words, in this stage they are alienated from inside.

Alienation from the Species Being

"Estranged labor estranges the species from man" (Marx, 31). In Marx's point of view, when laborers get alienated from works sooner or later they are about to alienated from human essence. In the last stage they suppress themselves to link off from the nature. This how they lose their human essence. Man is part of nature and is created by nature, therefore when "one is alienated from nature, one is also alienated from one's own species-being" (Marx 31). He also explains the role of labor in the construction of human as a 'species being' through these lines:

"It is just in his work upon the objective world that man really proves himself as a species being. This production is his active species life. By means of it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labor is, therefore, the objectification of man's species life; for he no longer produces himself merely intellectually, as in consciousness, but actively and in a real sense, and he sees his own reflection in a world which he has constructed" (Marx, 102).

In short, migrant laborers are estranged from their "human essence because they can't see the purpose of their labor" (Balci, 18). Their labor does not allow them to utilize nature to satisfy their utmost desires. Instead, labor is a part of the process of the capitalist mode of production where "the laborer is reduced to a mere piece of machinery" (Balci, 18).

To continue Marx's arguments, the question is now what happens once the laborers become alienated from the species life? The alienated labor turns the species life of man into an alien being. "It alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life" (Marx, 103).

Marx considers as social activity not only "those forms of activity that are directly communal but also individual activity" (John, 161). In the other hand Marx believes that social activity which connected directly to the nature can be destroyed by Capitalism. Human being is naturally a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, but the "capitalist system mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man" (Fromm 52).

Alienation of the Worker from the Other Worker

The alienation from other workers is believed as the consequences of the three modes. "Alienation of human from his/her labor and its product, from him/herself, and from his/her species life leads to the condition in which man is alienated from other men" (Marx ,103). This stage is where a man is eliminated from another men.

However, the one who alienate other workers might be the one who had been alienated before, this relates to Marx arguments, "What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, to their labor and to the object of their labor" (Marx, 103). The

relationship between the work and the products for the laborers themselves seems to have a relationship as strong as to other laborers. Therefore, "a self-alienated person is inevitably alienated from other persons" (Marx, 103). However, this relationship also leads to Marx's 'ownership' or described as the estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man [stands] to himself, is realized and expressed only in the relationship in which a man stands to other men (Marx 32).

The argument of ownership is if "something does not belong to a person then the owner must be another person, who automatically makes the other person hostile and alien" (Marx 33). What becomes an irony is in this last stage the object of alienation comes from another laborers. It is because in this stage they have to compete each other, at this stage of alienation the competition between workers is just begun which profits the company to in lust of wealthy due to the increasing numbers of production. As the result of their alienation of themselves, they unconsciously begin treating each other as objects. The concept of Marx's ownership seems to be felt by the laborers since the society should have to belong to everyone. Workers start to objectify and be degraded each other as the result of capitalist society encouragement, which in the other hand capitalist society increases degradation because everyone must have their place in society.

METHOD

The data will mainly be taken from the novel, *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. The writer takes the data in form of quotations, dialogues, and phrases directly from the novella that depict capitalism and alienation. Later, the data will be used to run the research. The data is also collected from the journals or other thesis from the library in order to support the purpose of the theory.

The capitalism society in the novella firstly be analyzed. After the writer analyze how capitalism society is described through, the discussion begins to reveal about characters' alienation. The Marxist's concept of alienation describes how they, as laborers, become alienated. At last, the writer had revealed some forms of alienation which are also as the effects of the Marxism capitalist, constructed from the society and also from himself. After finishing the data analysis, the conclusion is described from the whole analysis.

The data was taken, while the study was undergone, by buying the novel. After that, the researcher read the novel thoroughly. The expressions of the character which illustrate alienation were marked. The expressions, then, quoted and input in the study to assert the evidence.

RESULT

Since the novella was written during the Great Depression era of America, the atmosphere capitalism and class struggle in the story is very strong. However, to understand Marxist's modes of alienation, one should understand its relation to the economic background in the story. Therefore, capitalism occurs when there is a class

struggle between laborers and capitalists. In the story *Of Mice and Men*, the division of classes is between the proletariat, which is represented by ranch workers, and the capitalists which is represented by the ranch owners.

The capitalism, frankly, is presented negatively through the story. The opposition between powerful and powerless society is also depicted in the story. First, it is symbolized by the appearance description between the capitalist and the laborers. Curley, roles as capitalist, is depicted as "a thin young man with a brown face, with brown eyes and a head of rightly curled hair" (Steinbeck, 23). Although he is depicted as short and tiny figure, he also wears "a glove on his left hand, and, like the Boss, he wore high-heeled boots" (23). By stating that he wears a high-heeled boots, Steinbeck tries to demonstrate that Curley has this higher position than his workers. Everybody knows, when someone wears high heeled boots, he does not work the dirty parts. He does not want to look as a little person in front of his workers. He just does not want to lose it.

Unlike Curley, most of the ranch workers are described with flaws. Just like Crooks as described above, or Lennie who is described as "a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders" (Steinbeck, 2) in which he is a larger physically than Curley, however he has these sloping shoulders which depicts that Lennie is slow and dull.

Also like Candy, who is depicted as "tall stoop-shouldered old man" (Steinbeck, 56) but unfortunately, he also has lost one of his arms, "and out of the sleeve came a round stick-like wrist, but no hand" (56). This binary opposition of depicting the appearance of the characters by Steinbeck, between Curley (as capitalist) and Lennie also Candy (as proletariat), is interpreted as the symbolization of the class between the capitalist and the proletariat in the capitalism society.

Secondly, the symbolization of capitalism society is also depicted in the George's and Lennie's dream. They dream to live in a nice place for both of them.

"Sure, we'd have a little house an' a room to ourself. Little fat iron stove, an' in the winter we'd keep a fire goin' in it. It ain't enough land so we'd have to work too hard. Maybe six, seven hours a day. We wouldn't have to buck no barley eleven hours a day. An' when we put in a crop, why, we'd be there to take the crop up. We'd know what come of our planting." (Steinbeck, 29)

George's dream, in this case, can be interpreted as an ambivalent of the story. John Steinbeck wants to deliver the message of capitalism revolution in George's dream. One can see how George's eager in having his own land by saying is, "sure, we'd have a little house an' a room to ourself". In one hand, it is a symbolization of his revolt to the capitalism. It is a good thinking from George in his passion for a better living to get out from the grasp of capitalism. In the other hand, this quotation also symbolizes the capitalism inside George. "It ain't enough land so we'd have to work too hard" which shows that he wants to work hard to live his farm, however, "An' when we put in a crop, why, we'd be

there to take the crop up. We'd know what come of our planting", he does not want to share his yields to anyone. He takes everything comes up from his crops and no one may take it.

Clearly, their land of dream shows the capitalist' greed. Basically, capitalism is "an idea to rise above others" (Bogdonowicz, 1). George has a dream to live wealthy in his own land. He wants to end the capitalism in his life, however, sadly, by creating the other one. The symbolization above frankly explains how he, as a capitalist's victim, wants to live in capitalist's dream.

Capitalism, as discussed above, has become the basic theme of the story. Not only the story is set in the Great Depression era of America, but also the class division between the exploited ranch workers (proletariat) and ranch owner (capitalist) indicates that there is an economic inequality. Thus, according to Marx's view, economic problems bring several problems in humanity. One of his concern is alienation, as what he wrote on "The Estranged Labor" (1884).

Nevertheless, his arguments suit to this study's object. Both George and Lennie are migrant workers who travelled from Soledad to California to look for a job, which shows that the story is set in the Great Depression era of America. As migrant workers, they have to live and sleep inside the ranch as long as they work there. However this means that, George; Lennie and also the ranch workers, are exploited workers. Thus, this leads to the condition, which Marx marks as "Estranged Labor" or alienated labor. He has also divided the alienation into four features, which is discussed below.

Characters' Alienation from Product of Labor

George and Lennie are migrant workers. They move from their hometown, Soledad, to a promising-land, California. In some events, they hope that they can have a better living in their "fatta the land" (Steinbeck, 8). However, they end up in being ranch workers. As a couple of migrant workers, they do not have specific working skills since they have to keep moving and looking for any jobs as long as they can live. Nevertheless, the job as ranch workers might be something that is "external to the worker(s)" because "this is not part of his (their) nature(s)" (Marx, 98).

George and Lennie's condition suit to what Marx stated as "alienation of labor" (Marx, 98). Frankly, this mode of alienation comes from outside. It can be whether from the work or the product itself. Clearly, this first type of alienation is obvious in George. As the most dynamic character, George's thoughts develop through the plot of the story.

"“For two bits I'd shove out of here. If we can get jus' a few dollars in the poke we'll shove off and go up the American River and pan gold. We can make maybe a couple of dollars a day there, and we might hit a pocket”" (Steinbeck, 33).

Here is one of his thoughts he expresses in the middle of his work to Lennie. If previously, he dreams of having his own land someday, in this chance he develops his thought and realizes that, with his current condition, he would better off as ranch worker and move

somewhere and "make maybe a couple of dollars a day there" (33). This one doesn't only show how he depicts his current condition, in a surface, but also his alienation.

His work is external or something strange to his nature. This is shown by how he really wants to "shove out of here" or, in the other words, he wants to quit his job as ranch worker. As a low class laborer, he needs to get out from poverty. He thinks that by going to "American River" and having a job there is his best option. Moreover, he says that because he is intimidated by Curley. Just like the other ranch workers, George dislikes Curley. This is why his work is not "enjoyable labor" (Marx, 98) and turns him into "alienated laborers" (98).

"I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time" (Steinbeck, 41). The difficult work and temper situation working in the ranch unsurprisingly turn George and the other workers to be alienated. George, in this case, has a dream which he knows he would never reach. Rough condition working in the ranch does not satisfy his ambition to live freely out of the ranch.

"They ain't no good. They don't have no fun" (Steinbeck, 41), he says. George frankly describes how stressful the working situation is. This accords to Marx's view described by Fromm about enjoyable working labor which "is not only a means to an end -the product- but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy" (Fromm, 41-42), however George and all the ranch workers do not enjoy their works, because they does not find its meaning in spending their energies. Thus, it results to their anger which makes them want to fight all the time, which is clearly described by George.

"George-why ain't we goin' to the ranch and get some supper? They got supper at ranch." George rolled on his side. "No reason at all for you. I like it here. Tomorra we're gonna go to work. I seen trashin' machines on the way down. That means we'll be bucking grain bags, bustin' a gut. Tonight I'm gonna lay right here and look up. I like it." (Steinbeck, 7)

This one also symbolizes that George feels that he is "physically exhausted and mentally debased" (Marx, 98). George might be the only character to show how stressful the working situation at the ranch is.

He feels exploited by saying, "Tomorra we're gonna go to work. I seen trashin' machines on the way down. That means we'll be buckin grain bags, bustin' a gut" (Steinbeck, 7). He knows he does not enjoy his work and tired of being exploited. That is why he prefers to miss the supper with friends at ranch and lay down gazing at stars. This is a pretty good definition of his alienation by his work and his ambition of a freedom.

His alienation from work is also symbolized by his dreams of brighter future. At many chances, he tells Lennie about how he is going to live in his dream.

"And it'd be on our own, an' nobody could can us. If we don't like a guy we can say, 'Get the hell out', and by God he's got to do it. An' if a fren' come along, why we'd have an extra bunk, and we'd say,

'Why don't you spen' the night?' An' by God he would'" (Steinbeck, 58).

His dream is interpreted as his complain to his current work. Naturally, when a work suits to the worker, they do not do complain often. As a low class laborer, George is not paid enough. Simply, his dream shows his escape. He complains of his current work, but all he can do is nothing. Although it is only a dream, but this might help him developing his mental. All in all, being a ranch worker is something new for George. It is something that strange or external to his nature. Thus, this condition is interpreted as George's alienation of his work

Characters' Alienation from the Process of Producing

According to Marx, while in the first mode of alienation the workers get alienated from the produce or from the outer world of the workers, in this second stage of alienation the workers are alienated from the "act of production" (Marx, 99), or from the workers' inner world. Therefore this second stage of alienation is called as self-alienation of the workers. This alienation occurs when a laborer becomes "the less he belongs to himself" while keep working on an estranged job. George, in an event, portrays his emptiness in one chance.

"Well, we ain't got any," George exploded" (Steinbeck, 6). This expression is taken when George accepts his job from Curley as ranch worker. He already dislikes Curley from the first time they meet because George and Lennie are intimidated. Sadly, this is his only chance they have as a migrant worker. That is why George says that he got nothing left. Not even Lennie since he causes many troubles for George. Thus, his expression in this nothingness is what Marx argues about "an activity which is directed against himself, independent of him and not belonging to him" (Marx, 100) or so-called as "self-alienation" (100).

"Lennie leaned eagerly toward him. "Le's go, George. Le's get outta here. It's mean here'" (Steinbeck, 33). In this stage of alienation, the worker loses control to the production, because the capitalist controls how the production works. This makes the workers strange to the work which suits to Marx's argument, that the work is "something alien and not belonging to him" (Marx, 98). This is depicted by Lennie in the quotation above, he feels enough with his current job. He feels alienated from his work. He wants to quit and go directly to their dream land. He said that his working environment becomes mean to him. Thus, it is interpreted as his self-alienation from his work.

Characters' Alienation from Other Men

All the alienation features they experience leads to the condition which "men is alienated from other men" (Marx 103). This type of alienation similar to social alienation which is described above. However, this alienation is as a direct consequence of the three features of Marxism alienation. Throughout the story, most of the characters experience this type of alienation. Crooks is one of the characters who suffers the most.

"S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunk house and play rummy 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit

here and read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody-to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya, I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick" (Steinbeck, 72)

As described previously, Crooks is separated from the other characters because, politically, he is the only black man in the ranch. However, in Marx's view, it is not simply because he is black. The alienation comes actually from the class division. In the eye of capitalism, one will rise above others.

Unfortunately, Crooks' class is the lowest in clan. It is because socially, he is separated from the other white men. However, it affects in to the social division in the ranch. Thus, he becomes the weakest target to be alienated by the other alienated workers which suits with Marx's argument, that if "something does not belong to a person then the owner must be another person, who automatically makes the other person hostile and alien" (Marx, 33). Sadly, Crooks here is the only worker that is made hostile and alien from the other workers. His alienation is shown by the place where he lives.

"Crooks, the negro stable buck, had his bunk in the harness room; a little shed that leaned off the wall of the barn" (Steinbeck, 66). He lives separated from the other workers. While they all live in a more appropriate bunk house, he is depicted to live in a harness room. It is the place where the horse should have lived, but not human. This clearly depicts that he is alienated from the other men. He is alienated due to the capitalism. Where, basically, the higher class exploits the lower one.

The inhuman condition among the alienated workers in the ranch is unbearable for Crooks. He alienates back the society. "You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got right in here but me" (Steinbeck, 68). He alienates the society in purpose to "gain his ownership" (Marx, 32). This is also a capitalistic thought of an alienated laborer. His form of ownership on his harness room is a symbolization of capitalism. He might be alienated from the society, but he still defends his ownership in order to hold out from the capitalism as well as a reaction from his alienation.

Candy is alienated from the other ranch workers. It is because of his old and handicapped figure. However, according to Marx's view, he is alienated due to the capitalism in the ranch. The alienation is by killing his friend, his only dog. "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog" (Steinbeck, 31). This conversation is taken just after Carlson shoots Candy's dog. From his expression, the reader can feel how Candy loves his dog. By the death of his dog, Candy the old man feels a big loss. In fact, his loss affects him psychologically. He gives up on everything. He even wants himself to die, like he has nothing at all.

"You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself not nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do

anything like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs." (Steinbeck, 60)

However, this is also a symbolization of capitalism. Carlson, the right hand of Curley, kills Candy's dog in order to eliminate Candy. Candy has his voice among the workers since he acts as the elder. Sadly, Carlson snatch out his only ownership, the dog, from his hand.

This results in the estrangement of Candy. He gives up his life and wanting to join George and Lennie in chasing their dreams. "I'd make a will an' leave my share to you guys in case I kick off, cause I ain't got no relatives or nothing" (Steinbeck, 59). Clearly, Candy knows what Carlson is up to. He intends to eliminate Candy by estranging him which means sooner or later he gets kicked off from the ranch. Therefore, this event is an implication of alienation from Carlson to Candy.

CONCLUSION

This study can be concluded into two major points. The first is the portrait of the capitalism society in the story. Although the main focus in this study is Marxist's alienation, but it is important to mention the capitalism in the story since it is in the scoop of Marxism. The story *Of Mice and Men* does not rise any economic background of the characters obviously. However, the story is more about class division between worker-to-worker and inevitably between worker and owner. This class division depicts that there is a capitalism inside the ranch.

The capitalism in the story is symbolized into few forms. One significant form is the depiction of appearances of the characters. Curley, as the capitalist, is depicted almost flawlessly. He wears high-heeled boots and gloves, which implies that he does not do the dirty works. However, the ranch workers are always depicted with flaws. Like Crooks, he is mentioned as the only black man and also Candy who is old and handicapped which should not have worked in the ranch. Lennie is also mentioned as a big guy with mentally handicapped. This shows the binary opposition between capitalist and proletariats. Clearly, this is a signal of capitalism.

This idea is supported with the theme of the story. The novella was written during the Great Depression era of America. During this depression, American suffered economic problems due to the crash of stock market. Many of American became migrant workers, which is exactly depicted in George and Lennie. During the age, American competed each other in order to achieve welfare. Due to this economic background, Marx viewed that it causes many problems. One of his concern is alienation.

From Marx's writing in the *Estranged Labor*, the capitalism is the main cause of alienation. This is the reason why alienation becomes the major theme of the story. The ranch workers are alienated into several ways based on Marxist's features of alienation. George is alienated from his work. To be a ranch worker is something new, and of course, for a migrant worker like him. This leads to his self-alienation where he is alienated from the process of producing. Since the production is controlled by capitalists, all he has is

nothing. The alienation can also be analyzed in the figure of Crooks. He is the victim of class division. He is alienated from the other men since, socially, his class is below the other workers. Sadly, this is an endless cycle of alienation if they do not revolte the capitalism.

All in all, actually John Steinbeck wants to deliver the Marxism idea in *Of Mice and Men*. However, he does not illustrate the idea obviously. He portrays the capitalism society, not only between capitalist to proletariats, but also, mostly, between proletariats. Nevertheless, as long as this capitalism exists, which causes class division and all, Marxist's features of alienation might occur at any time and any place to any person.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Deepest gratitude was sent to Dr.Ali Mustofa, S.S, M.Pd. as my advisor, for his insights and suggestions encouraged this study to be completed.

REFERENCES

- Balci, Fatma. "Alienation and Exploitation in of Mice and Men." Print.
- Brewer, A. Kajian Kritis Das Kapitalis Karl Marx. Jakarta: TePLOK PRESS, 1999.
- Bogdonowicz, Boris. *Influences of the Teaching of Karl Marx on Of Mice and Men*. 2004.
- Cox, Judy. "An Introduction to Marx's Theory of Alienation." *Quarterly Journal of the Socialist Workers Party* (1998). Print.
- Dizdar, Srebren, and Alpaslan Toker. *Aliens in Light August*. Turkey: Seljuk University, 2012. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Ed. Preface. New York 2002. Print.
- Fromm, E. *Alienation: Marx's Concept of Man*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1980. Print.
- John, P.M. *Marx on Alienation: Elements of a Critique of Capitalism and Communism*. Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1976. Print.
- Kanungo, R. N. "The Concepts of Alienation and Involvement Revisited." *Psychological Bulletin* 86(1) (1979): 119-38. Print.
- Marx, Karl. "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844". Vol. 86(1). Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. Inc. Print.
- Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich. *Collected Works – Volume 37*. International Publishers, New York, 1998.
- Steinbeck, John. 1937. *Of Mice and Men*. United States.