

THE CIRCUS AND CIRCUS' PERFORMERS EXISTENCE IN THE GREATEST SHOWMAN MOVIE: A MARXISM STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study is held (1) to highlight the discrimination faced by P.T. Barnum and his circus friends as lower class people, (2) To disclose the reason why the upper class people hated P.T. Barnum's circus, and (3) To find out the effects of discrimination experienced by P.T. Barnum and his friends and how they overcame it using marxism theory by Karl Marx. This research used qualitative methodology. The result of this study is that the discriminations faced by P.T. Barnum and his circus friends were social class and physical appearance discrimination, upper class people hated P.T. Barnum's circus because it was considered fake and because of its performers' appearances, P.T. Barnum and his friends experienced seclusion and inferiority complex. They overcame it by doing self-acceptance and looking for recognition.

Keyword: Discrimination, popular culture, social categorization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous kinds of works are made in this world gratitude to 2,000,000 years of current human progress. Consistently we appreciate them. You must have an assortment of your number one films that you play consistently, or a pile of novel you generally read. Since numerous excitements are accessible, numerous individuals additionally start to compartmentalize the social class based from the entertainment they are into.

Fresh, R. J., and Hewstone, M (2007) in their book entitled Advances in trial social brain science: Vol. 39 said; "Social order happens immediately, absent a lot of thought on our part"

"One of the impact of social classification is the tendention to see individuals who have a place with a similar social gathering as more comparative than they really may be, and tendention to peer down individuals from lower social gatherings as more unique in relation to they really may be" (Linville and Fischer, 1986:21)

In the film "The Gratest Showman" coordinated by Michael Gracey, we are brought into the environment from 1850-1860 in the New York City where economic wellbeing was so significant. The high society individuals would in general blend with individuals who have an equivalent class, while individuals from the lower classes had no future other than blending with one another.

As the title recommends, this film recounts the story about the circus performers' life in right on time of 1800 in the New York City where the individuals were classified and isolated in privileged and lower class. In the story, the primary character named P.T. Barnum's was told battling from separation by privileged who considered circus to be a lower class diversion. The whole film centered around the struggles of P.T. Barnum to run his show.

In light of that reason, in this research, the researcher was intrigued to research and investigate the discriminations faced by P.T. Barnum and his friends, the reason people hated them and the effects of discriminaation and the way they overcame it.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

To help the researcher completed this research paper, the researcher utilized a research paper which utilizing and relating to Marxism theory by Karl Marx. The aim of ulitizing the other research paper was to get another viewpoint. Sadly the researcher barely found other research that utilizing "The Greatest Showman film".

The research paper the researcher used to improve its perspective was "Class Conflict in Film In Time: An Analysis Using Marxism Literary Criticism" by Yударis Octavian (2015).

Octavian (2015) explored the class struggle, structure of society and the character "IN TIME". He used qualitative method to gather the information. He utilized distinct research strategy to investigate his information. He began to dissect the information by separating the class structure which was important for Marxism study that was divided into two classes; Bourgeoise and Ploretariat.

3. METHOD

In this research, the researcher investigated and answered three problems by utilizing marxism approach. marxism approach investigates and inspects the monetary, social, and political philosophy of society, additionally the impact of free enterprise.

This reseacrth included different informations from the content of the film to get appropriate data. Later on, the collected information would be breakdown and be deciphered. The information generally about the social condition in New York City in mid 19 century.

The researcher used qualitative method. Qualitative method is the ideal weapon to give data about the physical, social, financial, or social phenomenas which reinforce researcher's longing to utilize it in this research.

The steps of collecting data the researcher used were as following below;

1. The researcher watched the “The Greatest Showman” movie for couple times;
2. The researcher took notes that relate to the issue;
3. The researcher chose the data that were relevant to the study and throw away the data that were irrelevants;
4. The researcher answered and anlyzed the questions using marxism theory and the data the researche collected.
5. The researcher made conclusions based on the all findings

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The discriminations faced by P.T Barnum and his circus friends were social class and physical appearance discrimination.

There were two forms of discrimination in “The Greatest Showman” movie, there were:

4.1.1 Social Class Discrimination

Social class discrimination made the mariage approval between lower class and uper class people hard to be realized. P.T. Barnum was one of the exact example. Since he was a lower class person or ploretariat, his love to Charity got rejections by Charity’s parents who came from upper class people or bourgeoisie.

As portrayed in the movie, if someone who had a high social class got married with the one who was ploretariat, automatically their social class would go down as low as their couple’s.

This was evidenced by several scenes that exist in the movie, where in the one of the scene P.T Barnum asked Charity who was a bourgeoisie to marry with him. Even though at the end Charity’s father still let Charity marries Barnum, he certainly hated and looked down on Barnum and believed that Charity would suffer and come back sooner or later.

“Sir, I... I know I don’t come from much, but I will take care of your daughter and I will give her a life as grand as this one.”—P.T Barnum

“Bye mother.”—Charity

"She'll be back. Sooner or later she will get tired of your life of having nothing and she will keep running back home."—Benjamin Hallet (00:08:51-00:09:20)

After hearing Mr. Hallet's saying, both P.T Barnum and Charity looked like they even did not care. Instead of being sad, they ran from Charity's mansion with smile on their faces. After that both P.T Barnum and his wife Charity were portrayed live their life hapily with their daughters even though they did not make good amount of money.

Similar to P.T Barnum and Charity's problem, Philip Carlyle who was a bourgeoisie faced marriage approval problem. Philip's family which was a bourgeoisie and came from wealthy family so distinguished that they wanted Philip to marry someone who was at least equal to him.

When Philip Carlyle first joined P.T Barnum circus, he was entralled by Barnum's actress named Anne Wheeler. From that day, Philip intentionally tried to get closer to her.

Philip Carlyle and Anne Wheeler got along well. One time on the Jenny Lind's concert produced by P.T Barnum, when Jenny Lind sang her song entitled Never Enough, Philip briefly started his move to Anne Wheeler by holding her hand.

Unfortunately, Philip Carlyle was caught holding Anne Wheeler's hand by his parents. He then suddenly released Anne Wheeler's which made Anne feeling a bit disapointed (00:51:30).

Philip Carlyle did not want to give up. He set up a date with Anne Wheeler. Accidentally, they encountered Philip's parents on the theater. Seeing their son dated a ploretariat, Philip's parents strongly opposed the relationship between Philip and Anne and scolded Philip as well.

“Philip, have you no shame? To associate yourself with that Barnum business is one thing but parading around with that elf” (01:02:25-01:02:34)—Mr.Carlyle

From the words of Philip's father, it was clear that Philip, who in fact came from a high social class was not allowed to participate in the circus show business of P.T Barnum and to get along with Anne Wheeler who looked like an elf to Mr. Carlyle.

With broken heart, Anne Wheeler runs away. Philip Carlyle who could not stand with his parent's arogances spilt all of his anger to both his father and mother.

“How dare you speak to her like that?”—Philip Carlyle
“You forget your place, Phillip.”—Mrs. Carlyle
“My place? Mother, if this is my place, then I don't wanna be a part of it.”—Philip (01:02:47- 01:03:01)

According to Mr. And Mrs. Carlyle's way of thinking, they refused the relationship between Philip and Anne. Both their words also indicated that their son who was a bourgeoisie chose the wrong path to get along with Anne who was a proletariat and works for P.T Barnum's circus.

4.1.2 Physical Discrimination

Charles was either prisoned by his own mother in house or by his own. And because of his look, he also shut himself down from people and society. At the time, Barnum came to his house and then asked Charles to join his circus show. But Charles refused and said that Barnum only wanted to make people laugh at him. He then had a little conversation and argumentation with Barnum.

“You want people to laugh at me.”—Charles

“Well, they are laughing anyway, kid. So, might as well get paid.”—P.T. Barnum (00:21:42-00:21:54)

The facts that Charles said that Barnum wanted to make people laugh at him if Barnum put him to his show and the way Barnum replied as if he agreed that people would laugh are to imply that people like to laugh to him. The fact that his own mother prisoned him and lied to Barnum that she did not have a son simply implied that she did not want people to know about Charles and looked down on him as they might used to.

The other physical discrimination was scened after Barnum successfully recruited Charles. Barnum started looking for another person to perform in his show. When he was swamped by a lot of pamphlet that needed to be stucked in, a pedestrian called him and said that he knew a place where Barnum could find unique person as he looked for.

“Hey. You looking for freaks? I know where you can find one of them.”—A pedestrian

“Really?”—P.T. Barnum

The use of word “Freaks” by the guy led the researcher to a conclusion that people got used to address other people with unique appearances as a freak. Freak means a person or animal having a physical oddity and appearing. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/freak>).

4.2 People hated P.T. Barnum's circus because it was considered fake and the because the performers' appearance

4.2.1 It was considered fake

Barnum's circus was fake. He made up his artists' appearance in case to give more impact to the audiences. In the scene where P.T. Barnum started to recruit more performers for his show, he was portrayed raising the weight of one of his applicant.

“Can I just ask how heavy you are? Do you have a number for that?”—P.T. Barnum

“I prefer not to say it, but...”—The applicant

“Just between you and me.”—P.T. Barnum

“500 pounds.”—The applicant

“750 pounds? you said?”—P.T. Barnum

“750 pounds!”—The applicant (00:24:31-00:24:43)

Right after P.T. Barnum and the applicant's small talk, Barnum printed the promotional banner with the title written as 'World's heaviest man'. He also adds the additional information that said the weight was over 750 lbs on the right bottom corner of the promotional banner.



Picture1. Barnum exaggerating the weight from 500 to 750 lbs

4.2.2 The Performers' Physical Appearance

Another reason people hated P.T. Barnum's circus was because of the circus' performers appearances.

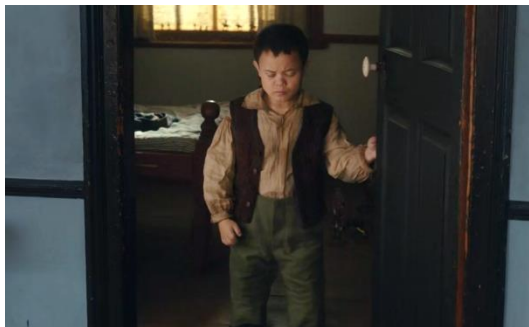
In the middle of the movie (00:41:43), people in New York did a demonstration to declare their thoughts that they refused Barnum's circus. They assumed that Barnum's circus was full of freaks and ashamed the city. During the demonstration, there were some people portrayed holding banners which said: “Why were They Born!”, “Protect our Children”, “Shame of the City”, and “No More Freak Show”



Picture2. The banners of demonstrators against Barnum's circus

4.3 The effect experienced by P.T. Barnum and his friends was doing seclusion and they overcame the discrimination by looking for recognition

4.3.1 The effect P.T. Barnum and his friends experienced by being discriminated are pretty much similar. The example of the effect was what Charles Stratton experienced. Because of the discrimination he was traumatized locked himself in his room and avoid the interaction to other people as scened in 00:21:27. This act is called seclusion. According to Huckshorn (2004: 22-23) seclusion is a form of withdrawal from social life caused by feelings of being disturbed or traumatized by the social environment.



Picture 3. Charles showing himself to Barnum after being lured

The same reaction was also shown by Letty Lutz who worked in a garment factory. She worked while hiding behind a white hanging fabric so that people around her would not be able to see her bearded face (00:23:00)

4.3.2 Barnum and his friends overcame the discrimination by looking for recognition

According to Honneth (1995:203) recognition is a reward in forms of acknowledgment to people's existence because of their achievement, economy, their social status etc. By receiving a recognition, someone's perception about oneself-worth raises.

Oneday when P.T. Barnum and the circus' performers gathered in the morning, Philip who came late brought the good news for all of them. Thank to his relation, he was able to

make Queen Victoria of England wanted to meet P.T. Barnum. Philip even carried the invitation letter on his hand. He continued to give the invitation letter to Barnum.

“The master of the Household, has it in the command of the Queen to invite Mr. Phineas Barnum and his theatrical troop to a reception at Buckingham Palace.”—Banurm

“The Queen Victoria? Is this real?”—Charity

“I had to pull a few strings. If you want society to accept you, you may as well start at the very very top.”—Philip (00:42:20-00:42:42)

In this citation Philip expressed his idea that if they wanted to win the people’s heart and wanted people on the town accept them, they needed to start at the very top place to get people’s attention and recognition.

5. CONCLUSION

Art often reflects the identity and social class of its audiences. In the “The Greatest Showman” movie by Michael Gracey set in 19 century, the circus was considered as a low-class entertainment and did not fit to upper class. Looking at the historical background, Circus was only street attraction and never been displayed in a luxurious ballroom as ballet been in the movie. Moreover in the "The Greatest Showman", the circus members consisted of strange-looking people. It proved that ethnicity, race, physical appearance, economy were the objects of discrimination in the movie.

Therefore, there were plenty evidences said how rejection existed for P.T. Barnum and his friends as a Ploretariat. Back then in that age, social class pyramid was bold and very obvious. Therefore ploretariat that tried so hard just to be part of bourgeoisie was a common thing back then.

As filmed in The Greatest Showman, Barnum who was raised from low class society obsessed to raise his life standard and status. Yet, right after had everything, he was blinded by endless obsessions before he made up his mind. From that story, we can learn that whoever you are, your social status does not matter because the point of being alive is live your life with passion and joy as Philip says, inheritance, acclaim, an invitation in every party in the town will never be able to replace love, friendship, and work that we adore.

6. SUGGESTION

The researcher hoped that this research paper entitled “The Circus and Circus’ Performers Existence in The Greatest Showman Movie: A Marxism Study could be able to help the other researchers to do the similar research using marxism study through qualitative method. The reaeacher also hoped that this research could give a new point of view also a reference for all English students who read this research paper.

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